

102d

THE
Bishop of LONDON's
Third Pastoral Letter
TO THE
PEOPLE
OF HIS
DIOCESE;

Particularly, to those of the two
great Cities of *London* and *Westminster*.

Occasion'd by the Suggestions of
Infidels against the Writings of the NEW
TESTAMENT, consider'd as a *Divine*
Rule of *Faith* and *Manners*.

Gibson *K*

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The BISHOP of *London's*
Third Pastoral Letter, &c.

Occasion'd by the Suggestions of Infidels against the Writings of the NEW TESTAMENT, consider'd as a Divine Rule of Faith and Manners.



IN my two former Letters, I have laid before you the Evidences of the Christian Religion, as drawn from the Accounts which the Evangelists give us of our Saviour Christ, viz. ' The general *Expectation* of the Messiah at that Time, arising from the Prophecies concerning him; ' The many and great *Miracles* which he wrought, in confirmation of his Doctrine and Mission; ' His *Predictions* of several very remarkable Events, which were afterwards punctually fulfill'd; and, ' The wonderful *Propagation* of the Gospel after his Death, against all the Powers of the World, and the Lusts, Passions, and Prejudices of Mankind. To these I have added the Evidences of the great *Need* there was of such a Revelation

First Past. Lett. p. 22.
Second Past. Lett. p. 14.

Second
Past. Lett.
P. 51.

lation from God ; considering the gross Ignorance and Corruption of Manners into which the World was sunk, and the Inability of the Philosophers to enlighten and reform it. And this led me to lay before you the *Excellency* of the Christian Institution for the effecting what the Philosophers could not effect ; ‘ The great Advantage of a *Divine Authority*, to *ascertain* the Duties and Doctrines it lays down ; ‘ The *Purity* of its Precepts, so much higher and more perfect, than those which meer Morality prescrib’d ; ‘ The natural *Tendency* of them to fit and prepare the Soul for the spiritual Exercises of the next Life ; ‘ The *strict* Restraints which the Gospel lays upon irregular Enjoyments of all kinds, not only in the *outward* Acts, but the *inward* Imaginations and Desires ; ‘ The *full* Assurance it gives of future Rewards and Punishments to *excite* us to Obedience, and the supernatural Assistance it promises, to *enable* us to obey ; ‘ The Peace and Satisfaction it affords the Mind, by discovering a *plain* and *certain* Method of obtaining the Pardon of Sin, and thereby securing the Love and Favour of God ; ‘ The solid Foundation it lays for Ease and Comfort under all the Calamities of Life, and more especially for Patience, Resignation and Constancy under Sufferings and Persecutions *for Righteousness-sake* ; ‘ The Means it provides for preserving an habitual Sense of God and Religion upon the Minds of Men, by the Appointment of a Ministry, and Ordinances, and publick Assemblies, for that End ; and, upon the whole, ‘ The Perfection and Happiness to which it advances human Nature, both in this Life, and the next, far beyond any thing that the meer
natural

natural Powers of Body and Mind could have discover'd and attain'd to.

And as a *Consequence* of the clear and undoubted Evidences of our Saviour's Mission and Authority, and of the Excellency of the Gospel-Institution; I have further shewn the indispensable Obligation we are under to *at-* Second Past. Lett. p. 73.
tend to it and *embrace* it; together with the Folly, Perverseness and Sinfulness of not embracing it, and much more of *despising* and *rejecting* it.

Since therefore both the *Evidences* and the *Excellency* of the Christian Institution, and of the whole Work of our Redemption by Jesus Christ, are so fully and clearly laid down in the Writings of the *New Testament*, from Ibid. p. 52.
whence I drew my Accounts of them; Infidelity can have no possible Refuge, but in a downright Disbelief of the *Truth* and *Authority* of those Writings; either as forg'd from the Beginning or convey'd to us with great Corruptions; or as containing Facts related by Persons who had no Credit and Doctrines deliver'd by those who had no Authority. This is the Refuge to which it was easily foreseen the Infidels of our Age must have their final Recourse, to justify their rejecting the Doctrine of our Redemption by Christ, and their avow'd Disregard of the Writings of the *New Testament* further than as they contain such moral Precepts, as Natural Reason might suggest and such as may in their Opinion be learnt as well, if not better, from Heathen Writers. As it is impossible to maintain that Scheme, on Supposition that those Writings are true and genuin, and that the Doctrines contain'd in them sublist upon a divine Authority ;

rity; the Patrons of it must of necessity be driven to deny one or other of those Assertions, if not both. The *Consequence* on each side is clear and undoubted: If the Writings of the *New Testament* be not authentick (*i. e.* either the Writings not genuin, or the Authority not Divine,) the Infidel-Scheme is well founded; but, on the other hand, if they be authentick in both those respects, Christianity stands unshaken and immoveable, and all Pretences either that it is not well-founded, or that it is no more than meer Morality, must fall to the Ground.

Page 21.
22.

Christianity as old as the Creation, p. 201.

—p. 371.

—p. 192.

—p. 328.

—p. 185.

This is a Point which I *touch'd upon* in my first Pastoral Letter. But since that Time, the Patrons of Infidelity have told us openly and without reserve, how little they consider the Scriptures as a Rule to Men, either of Belief or Practice. They plead for the reading them with such *Freedom*, as to *assent or dissent, just as they judge it agrees or disagrees with the Light of Nature and the Reason of Things*; and commend those as the only wise Men, who *believe not the Doctrines, because contain'd in Scripture, but the Scripture on account of the Doctrines*; who *admit not any of it's Doctrines without an Examination* by that Rule; who *admit such Things for divine Scripture, as [they being Judges] tend to the Honour of God and the Good of Men, and nothing else*; and, who *do not admit any thing to be writ by divine Inspiration, tho' it occurs ever so often in Scripture, till they are certain it will bear the Test* they lay down. They insist further, how easily Mankind may be *impos'd on* in the point of *Revelation*; and how little Certainty there is or can be, that any Revelation *has been convey'd*

vey'd entire to distant Times and Places; and they rest much upon the great Number of various Readings in the Copies of the New Testament, as rendering it uncertain to us what the true Text was; and alledge, That no Court of Judicature admits of a Copy, tho' taken from the Original, without Oath made by a disinterested Person, of his having compar'd it with the Original; from whence they conclude, how unreasonable it is absolutely to depend, in Things of the greatest Moment, on voluminous Writings, which have been so often transcrib'd by Men who never saw the Original. Page 284.
324.
—p. 324.

These, and others of the like Tendency, are the Principles which the Infidels of our Age are openly and avowedly advancing; that by destroying the Credit of the Holy Scriptures, they may make way for their own Scheme of Natural Religion. And there are also others among us, who tho' they do not dispute our receiving the *four Gospels* as a Rule of Faith and Practice, will not agree that the *other Books* of the *New Testament* have a Right to be consider'd as part of that Rule; but, on the contrary, have taken great pains to represent some of those Books as of doubtful Credit.

Since therefore those Sacred Writings, as having all of them the Stamp of divine Authority, are the great Charter of Christians, upon the *Validity* of which their Faith and their Hope are built; to the end that those whom the Providence of God has plac'd under my Care, may be arm'd in all Points against the Attempts of Infidelity and every Approach to it, I have judg'd it expedient to enter into that Matter more fully and distinctly, in order to give you a clear View of the Evidences both of the *Truth* and the *Authority* of those Writings.

Writings. And this I consider, as in some sort a *Duty* incumbent upon me. For having shown you in my Second Letter the *Insufficiency* of Reason in this corrupt State to be your Guide in Matters of Religion, it may well be expected, that I also show you what is a *sufficient* Guide, and where the Directions are to be found, which will acquaint you with the certain Way to Salvation, and upon which you may securely depend, as being the Guide which God himself has given you. And this will be effectually done, by making good the following Positions :

I. The four Gospels contain a *faithful* and *true* Account of the Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ.

II. The whole Scheme of Christianity or the Gospel Dispensation, was not fully open'd to the World by Christ himself immediately, in the course of his Ministry; but many Things were left by him to be deliver'd or explain'd by his *Apostles*, whom he particularly Instructed and Commission'd for that End.

III. The Apostles, in virtue of their Commission from Christ, being not only to testify and deliver to the World the Things which they had seen and had been taught by him, but *further* to open and explain the Gospel Dispensation; were *under the Guidance and Assistance of the Holy Ghost*, which they receiv'd, according to his Promise, before they enter'd upon their Ministry.

IV. What the Things are, relating to the Gospel-Dispensation, which the Apostles were to open and explain, pursuant to the Commission and Instruction receiv'd from Christ and under the Guidance and Assistance of the Holy Ghost; must,

must, in conjunction with the Gospels, be learnt from their Preaching and Writings, as deliver'd to us in their *Acts* and *Epistles*.

V. The Books of the *New Testament*, in which the Doctrines deliver'd by Christ and his Apostles are contain'd, have been faithfully *transmitted* to the Christians of succeeding Ages.

VI. The Doctrines of the Apostles, contain'd in their *Epistles* and in the *Acts*, together with what is taught by our Saviour in the *Gospels*, were *design'd* to be a standing Rule of *Faith* and *Manners* to Christians in all Ages, and were from the Beginning consider'd and receiv'd as such, by the Churches of Christ.

I. *The four Gospels contain a faithful and true Account of the Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ.* When we would be satisfied concerning the Truth of any History, the two Things we chiefly enquire after, are, The Knowledge the Writer had of his Subject, and the Character he bore in Point of Integrity; the first, to convince us that he could not be imposed upon himself, and the second, that he had no Inclination or Design to impose upon others. Now, that there was such a Person as *Jesus of Nazareth*, who lived at the Time the Gospels speak of, and who made choice of several Persons to be his Disciples, are Facts, which the greatest Enemies of Christianity have never denied; and if they had denied them, they would have been effectually confuted by Writers of undoubted Credit, who lived at the Time, and in the Age which immediately followed. Of these Disciples in general, it is affirmed, and has never been denied or questioned, That they left their

several Callings and Occupations, to the end they might be wholly at Liberty to attend Jesus, and receive his Instructions: *He ordain'd twelve, that they should be with him; who, with others, accompanied him all the Time that he went in and out among them; beginning from the Baptism of John, unto the same Day that he was taken up from them: And having been with him from the Beginning, they were well qualified to bear Witness of the Things that were done and spoken by him. And what we find particularly declared by one, might be truly said by all of them, where-ever they preached, 'That which we have heard, which we have seen with our Eyes, which we have looked upon, and our Hands have handled, declare we unto you. The Things they recorded as said and done by Christ, they heard from his own Mouth, and saw with their own Eyes, and did not deliver them upon the Report of others. Nor did they only see him, so as to have a transient View of him; but they look'd upon him, and had long-continued Views of him, and conversed familiarly with him. And, that their Eyes might not be deceived, either with Regard to his Person or Miracles, they not only touched, but handled; their own Hands distributed the Loaves; and after his Resurrection, they were all directed, not only to behold his Hands and his Feet, to satisfy them that it was he himself, but also to handle him, that they might be thoroughly convinc'd that he had Flesh and Bones, and so could not be a Spirit, as they at first suspected. And one of them, who was more distrustful than the rest, was commanded even to thrust his Hand into the Wound in his Side.*

Mark iii.
14.

Acts i. 21.

Joh. xv.
27.

1 Joh. i. 1.

Luk. xxiv.
39.

Joh. xx.
27.

The same Persons who were thus prepared, by all *ordinary* and *natural* Qualifications, to give an Account of the Life and Actions of Christ, received also a *supernatural* Assistance for the Work, by his sending the Holy Ghost, for this among other Ends, *that he might bring all Things to their Remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them.* And two of these, so enabled by all Helps natural and supernatural, wrote two of the Gospels, namely *Matthew* and *John*. As to *Mark* and *Luke*, the other two Evangelists; it is affirmed by some of the Ancients, that they were two of the Seventy Disciples, whom our Lord sent before his Face to every City and Place whither he himself would come; to whom he gave Power to *heal the Sick*, and to cast out Devils; and said to them, as he had done to the twelve Apostles, *He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.* But however that be; after our Saviour's Ascension we find them expressly mentioned as Fellow-Labourers with *St. Paul*, to whom the whole Gospel had been immediately revealed from Heaven, and one of them with *St. Peter*, whom Christ chose to be with him in the whole Course of his Ministry. *St. Paul* speaks of *Mark*, as his *Fellow-Labourer* in the Gospel, whom we accordingly find with him when he wrote his Epistle to the *Colossians* and that to *Philemon*; and when he commands *Timothy* to come to him, he directs him to take *Mark* and bring him with him, as one profitable to him in the Ministry. *St. Peter* mentions him in his first Epistle, as then with him, and also calls him *his Son*; a Name, which we find applied in the New Testament to those

Luk. x. 1,
9, 16, 17.

Col. iv. 10,
11.
Phil. 24.

2 Tim. iv.
11.

1 Pet. v.
13.

whom the Apostles had instructed in the Faith and converted, and to those who laboured with them in instructing and converting others ; for
 Phil. ii. 22. in this Sense, St. *Paul* says of *Timothy*, *As a Son with the Father, he hath served with me in the Gospel*; and of *Titus*, *Mine own Son after the common Faith*. *Luke* also is called by St. *Paul* his *Fellow-Labourer* ; whom we find accompanying him in his Travels, and particularly to have been with him when he wrote his Epistles to the *Colossians*, to *Timothy*, and to *Philemon*.

Accordingly, the Accounts which the Ancients give of those two Gospels and the Writers of them, are as follows. *Irenæus* says, c. 1. ‘ That *Mark*, the Disciple and Interpreter of *Peter*, committed those Things to Writing which had been related to him by *Peter*, and that *Luke*, the Companion of *Paul*, recorded in a Book the Gospel which *Paul* preached.’
 And elsewhere, he says of St. *Luke*, ‘ That he was an inseparable Companion of St. *Paul*, and his Fellow-Labourer in the Gospel.’ *Tertullian* says, ‘ That the Gospel which *Mark* published, is affirmed to be *Peter*’s, whose Interpreter he was [as writing in Greek what he heard St. *Peter* deliver to the *Jews* in their own Language] and that which was drawn up by *Luke*, is ascribed to *Paul*.’ *Eusebius* relates, upon the Authority of more ancient Writers, ‘ That the Christians at *Rome* prevailed with *Mark* to set down in writing the Doctrine which *Peter* had preach’d; and that afterwards *Peter* confirmed it, and authorised it to be publicly read in their Assemblies.’ And elsewhere, from *Origen*, ‘ The second Gospel is that of *Mark*, who set it down as it was delivered

livered to him by *Peter* ; and the third, that of *Luke*, which is commended by *St. Paul*.' To these we must add what the same *Eusebius* says, *Euseb. l. 3.* as handed down by Tradition to his Time, *c. 24.*

' That *St. John* approved the three other Gospels, and gave his Testimony to the Truth of them.' And, ' That Copies of these Holy *Ibid. c. 37.* Gospels were with great Zeal conveyed to remote Countries, by those who succeeded the Apostles in the Propagation of the Christian *Just. Mart. Apol. 2.* Faith : ' and they were read in the publick Assemblies and received as the *Foundation* of that *Iren. l. 3. c. 11, 12.* Faith; without the least Mark of Distinction in Point of *Authority*.

Thus stands the Evidence of the Truth of the Gospel-History, with regard to the exact Knowledge the Writers had of their Subject ; which shows that they were not imposed upon themselves. And if it shall also appear that they were Persons of Integrity, and had no Inclination or Design to impose upon others, the Evidence is as complete, as can well be given of any ancient Facts whatsoever. With this View, let us consider, ' The Character and Condition of the Persons, and ' The Time and Manner of their Writing ; with other Circumstances, from whence we may judge whether or no they are attended with any Marks or Suspicions of *Fraud* or *Design*.

So far were the Persons from being artful or designing Men, that they were reproach'd by the Enemies of Christianity, as rude and mean, simple and illiterate ; and so far were they from having any worldly Views of Profit, or Pleasure, or Honour, after they set out on the Work of propagating the Gospel ; that Persecution, Affliction, and Reproach, were almost
the

the constant Attendants of the Propagators of it. As to the *Time*, they wrote and published their Gospels while the Matters were fresh in Memory, and while many Persons were living who wanted not Inclination to detect them, if they could have been convicted of Falshood. And as to their *Manner* of Writing, it is plain, open, and undisguised; free from all Appearance of Art or Contrivance, and carries in it this Signal Testimony of Truth and Impartiality, that they freely confess and record the Failings and Weaknesses of themselves and their Brethren, *viz.* The frequent Rebukes they received from their Master for their Ignorance and Slowness of Understanding; Their Views of temporal Power and Grandeur, during their Attendance upon him; and at last, Their shameful Denial and Desertion of him. If we consider the *Facts* contained in the Gospel-History, and the Tendency of them, they are such as overthrow the Religion both of Jews and Gentiles, and therefore could not escape the severest Scrutiny; and if we consider the *Numbers* who afterwards undertook to attest and publish those Facts, it is incredible that if they were not true, no one of them should be prevailed with, either by Hope or Fear, to discover the Imposture; and next to impossible to suppose, that all of them should submit to the severest Trials, and many of them to Death itself, rather than deny them.

These are the Evidences, that the Evangelists could not be deceived themselves, and that they had no Intention or Desire to deceive others. And we accordingly find all the four Gospels under the Names of the several Evangelists distinctly spoken of by the most
early

early Writers of the Church, as the known and undoubted Records of our Saviour's Life and Actions, and as such, received by all Christian Churches, and read in their publick Assemblies. *Clement*, the Disciple of *St. Paul*, cites many Passages out of them; and, in one Place, after having quoted the Prophecy of *Isaiab*, he adds, *and another Scripture saith*, and then quotes the Gospel of *St. Matthew*: In another Place, he cites the Gospel of *St. Luke*, with these Words immediately prefixed, *The Lord saith in the Gospel*. *Polycarp* a Disciple of *St. John*, mentions these four Gospels distinctly and by Name, with particular Circumstances relating to each. *Justin Martyr*, speaking of the Institution of the Lord's Supper, says, 'The Apostles in their *Records*, which are called Gospels, declared that it was commanded by Christ to be so performed; and a little after adds, 'That those Records were publicly read in the Christian Assemblies on the Lord's Day; and, in his other Works, he uses the same Stile of the *Records of the Apostles*, and cites several Passages out of them, as the standing Records of the Church. * *Tatian*, the Disciple of *Justin*, reduced the four Gospels into one, which in After-ages was usually called the *Harmony of the four Gospels*. † *Irenæus* gives this Account of all the four, which hath already been taken Notice of in part*, "*Matthew*, says he, delivered his Gospel to the *Hebrews*, while *Peter* and *Paul* preach'd at *Rome*; after whose Departure, *Mark* the Disciple and Interpreter of *Peter*, conveyed to us in Writing the Things which *Peter* had preach'd; and *Luke*, the Companion of *Paul*, recorded in a Book the Gospel which *Paul* preach'd.

Clem. Ep.
ad Cor.
Ep. 2. S. 2,

8.

Grabe,
Not. in I-
ren.
p. 205.

Justin. A-
pol. 2.

Justin. Di-
al. Tryph.
p. 327,
328, 329,
331, 332,
333, 334.
* Euseb.
l. 4. c. 29.
Monotef-
faron.

† Iren.
l. 3. c. 1.

* Pag. 12.

“ preach’d. Afterwards, *John* the Disciple of
 “ our Lord, who also lean’d on his Breast at
 “ Supper, published his Gospel while he stayed at
 Iren. l. 3. “ *Ephesus* in *Asia*.” The same *Irenæus*, speak-
 c. 11. ing of the Authority of the Gospels, says,
 ‘ That the very Hereticks gave their Testi-
 mony to them, while each laboured to support
 his Opinion from them ; ’ and as to the Num-
 ber, ‘ That they were neither more nor less
 than four, and that they who made them either
 more or fewer, were vain, ignorant and pre-
 sumptuous.’ *Clement*, speaking of a Passage
 Clem. A- cited out of the *Ægyptian* Gospel, says, It is
 lex. Strom. not to be found in the four Gospels which
 l. 3. have been delivered down to us.’ And *Origen*,
 Orig. mentioning the Writers of the four Gospels by
 Com. in Name, and in their Order, says, ‘ That those
 Matth. P. alone (and no other Gospels) had been uni-
 203. versally received in the Church.’

The faithful *Transmission* of the Gospels to
 future Ages, is a Point that will fall properly
 under the fifth general Head ; and therefore I
 will shut up this first Head, after I have shown
 in a few Words, that several of the Facts re-
 lated in the Gospels, receive Confirmation from
 the Testimony of other Historians, both *Jew-
 ish* and *Pagan*, who lived at or near the Time.
 I have observed before, that it has never been
 denied by the Writers of either Sort, that
 there was such a Person as *Jesus*, who liv’d in
Judæa, and suffer’d Death upon the Cross, at
 the Time mentioned in the Gospels. The
 Name which the *Jews* have given him with
 Reference to his *Crucifixion* (however re-
 proachfully intended) is an Acknowledgment
 of the Truth of the Fact ; for which, and for
 other Particulars relating to him, the Christians
 appealed

The Per-
 son hang-
 ed.

appealed to the Accounts transmitted to *Rome*; Tertull. Apol.
 according to the known Usage of the Govern-
 nors making Returns thither, of the Transac-
 tions in their respective Provinces. All these
 Things concerning Christ, says *Tertullian*, were Acta Pilati.
 reported by *Pilate to Tiberius Cæsar*. The
 same is attested by *Tacitus*, a *Roman* Historian of Tacit. An-
 nal. l. 15.
 c. 44.
 undoubted Credit; who speaking of the Chris-
 tians, says, 'They take the Name from *Christ*,
 who was put to Death in the time of the Emperor
Tiberius, by *Pontius Pilate*.' Nor did *Julian*
 himself, the bitterest Enemy that Christianity
 ever had, deny that there was such a Person,
 or affirm that there was no Foundation for the
 Truth of the Gospel History: On the con-
 trary, he owns the Gospels to have been writ- Cyril, l. 6.
 & 10.
 ten by the Persons whose Names they bear,
 and only blames them for magnifying
 the Works of their Master beyond Mea-
 sure; the Truth and Reality of which Works,
Celsus also does in Effect acknowledge, when First Part.
 Lett. p. 29.
 he ascribes them to Art Magick. Defences,
 which neither of these would have had Re-
 course to, if they could have proved that the
 Books themselves were spurious; nor would
 they have omitted to take the Advantage even
 of a *Suspicion* of their being spurious, but that
 they knew there was no Foundation for it.

There are many other Facts which the Evan-
 gelists relate, that are also attested both by Hea-
 then and Jewish Writers. The Gospels frequently
 mention the Warnings which Christ gave his
 Disciples and Followers, that they must rec-
 kon upon a State of great Trials and Suffer- Tacit.
 Nero.
 Sueton.
 Nero.
 Plin. Ep.
 lib. 10.
 ings for the Sake of his Religion; and *Tacitus*,
Suetonius, and *Pliny* are Witnesses, how very
 terrible those Persecutions were. The Evan-
 gelists

gelifts mention the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, as foretold by our Saviour ; and the Account given of that Destruction by *Josephus* the *Jewish* Historian, which exactly corresponds with what they relate from the Mouth of Christ, is a Testimony to the Truth of that Relation. As the same *Josephus* has also confirmed the Truth of the Gospel History in general, by the Accounts he gives of the *Roman* Governors, and the *Jewish* Oeconomy at that Time; being agreeable, both as to Persons and Things, with the Accounts which the Evangelists give us of them.

First Part.
Lett. p. 36.

Pilate, Felix, Festus, &c.
Sanhedrim, &c.

II. *The whole Scheme of Christianity, or the Gospel-Dispensation, was not fully open'd to the World by Christ himself immediately, in the Course of his Ministry; but many things were left by him to be deliver'd or explain'd by his Apostles, whom he particularly instructed, and commission'd, for that end. The Office of John the Baptist, was only to give notice that the Kingdom of Heaven, or of God, i. e. of the Messiah, was at hand, and to summon Men to Repentance as a necessary Qualification to be admitted Members of that Kingdom, and to escape the Wrath to come. Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. The like Commission was given by Christ to the Twelve Apostles, when he first sent them forth; As ye go, preach, saying the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand; and to the Seventy Disciples, when he sent them two and two before his Face into every City and Place whither he himself would come; Say unto them, the Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. In like manner, Jesus himself went about all the Cities and Villages, teaching in their Synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the*

Matt. iii. 2.

Matt. x. 7.

Luk. x. 9.

Matt. ix.

35.

the Kingdom, or the good News of the coming of the Messiah. But he was so far from openly proclaiming or owning himself to be the *Messiah*, that he industriously concealed it, lest the *Jews*, who expected a temporal Deliverer from the *Roman Yoke*, should break out into Rebellion, and make him obnoxious to the *Roman Power* before the Completion of his Ministry. When *Peter*, in the Name of the Disciples, had declared to him their full Con-
 viction *That he was Christ the Son of the Living God*; the Charge he immediately gave them, was, *That they should tell no Man, that he was Jesus the Christ*. When the unclean Spirits fell down before him, and cry'd, saying, *Thou art the Son of God*, (a known Appellation of the *Messiah* among the *Jews*) it immediately follows, *That Jesus strictly charged them, that they should not make him known*. After his Transfiguration upon the Mount, and a Voice from Heaven declaring him to be *the Son of God*; Jesus charges the three Disciples who were with him, *That they should tell the Vision to no Man, untill the Son of Man was risen again from the Dead*. Nor did he ever make a publick Profession and Acknowledgment that he was the Messiah, till he was arraign'd, first before the Council of the *Jews*, and then before *Pontius Pilate*, i. e. after he had finish'd his Ministry upon Earth, and there was no Danger, either that the People would raise a *Sedition* upon his Account, or that he should be arraign'd and put to Death before the appointed Time. But with regard to *the People*, the great Aim and Design of his Ministry was, first to convince them by his Miracles that he was a *Prophet* sent from God; which being join'd to the

Matt. xvi.
16, 20.

Mark iii.
11, 12.

Luk. iv.
41.

Matt. xvii.
9.

Mark xiv.
62.

Luk. xxii.
70.

Joh. xviii.
37.

the general Expectation of the Messiah at that Time, might lead them to *suppose* that he was the Person; and then, to *prepare* them for the Reception of the Gospel, by taking off the carnal and corrupt Glosses which the Scribes and Pharisees had put upon the Moral Law, and by laying open the Pride, Covetousness and Hypocrisy of those Teachers: And this, in order to convince the People, how unfit they were to be Guides in Religion; and by that Means to set them at Liberty from the Influence and Authority of Persons, whose Interest it was, and whose Endeavour it would be, to give all the Opposition they could to the Gospel, that they might preserve and maintain their own Power. But what he said to the *People* concerning the Kingdom of Heaven or the Gospel-State, and the Nature and future Progress of it, was for the most part delivered in Parables; which he explain'd to his Disciples when they were alone, to let them by Degrees into some Understanding of the Nature and Design of that Spiritual Kingdom which he intended to establish; reserving the *complete* and *perfect* Discovery thereof, till he had finish'd the great Work of our Redemption by his Resurrection from the Dead, and had fully prepared them for the Publication of the Gospel, by sending the Holy Ghost to instruct and strengthen them. For we find in the Course of our Saviour's Ministry, that notwithstanding the Lights he occasionally gave them, their Knowledge of these things was very imperfect. He often complains of the *Slowness* of their Understanding, in that they did not apprehend the Design of his Parables, nor arrive at a firm and stedfast Faith in him, by the frequent Oppor-

Matt. xiii.

34.

Mark iv.

21.

Mark iv.

34.

7
f
e

Matt. xv.

18.

Mark vii.

18.

Opportunities they had of hearing his Doctrine and seeing his Miracles. When he first began to shew them, that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the Elders and Chief Priests and Scribes, and be kill'd, and be raised again the third day; Peter, who before had made so full a Confession of his Belief that he was the Messiah, began to rebuke him for these Sayings, *Be it far from thee, Lord, This shall not be unto thee.* Upon which our Lord told him, *That he savour'd not the things that be of God, but those that be of Men.* And on a like Occasion S. Luke says, *That they understood none of these things, and this Saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.* When the Samaritans would not receive him in his Way to Jerusalem, two other of his Disciples James and John, who, together with Peter, were most conversant with him, desired Leave to command Fire to come down from Heaven, and consume them, as Elias had done in a like Case; and they received this Rebuke from him, *Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of (i. e. how different the Spirit of the Gospel is from that of the Law) for the Son of Man is not come to destroy Men's Lives, but to save them.* In the whole Course of his Ministry, they evidently reckon'd upon his setting up a temporal Kingdom, and had Strifes among themselves which of them should then be the greatest; and even after his Resurrection, the Question they ask him upon that Head, is, *Whether he will at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel.* All which, together with the Acts of forsaking and denying him, the Difficulty they shew'd in believing his Resurrection, and that Slowness of Heart

Matt. xvi.
8, 11.

Mark viii.
14, 17, 21.

Matt. xvi.
21, 22, 23.

Luk. xviii.
34

Luk. ix. 54.

Matt. xviii.
1.

Matt. xx.
20, 24.

Luk. xxii.
24.

Acts. i. 6.

Heart with which he upbraided them for not
 Luk. xxiv. 25. *applying* the Prophecies concerning him even
 after he had suffer'd and was risen from the
 Dead; are undeniable Testimonies, how im-
 perfect Notions they had as yet of the Nature
 and Oeconomy of the Gospel State, and how
 great Need there was of those *further* Instruc-
 tions which he gave them during the *forty*
 Acts i. 3. Days, in which he was *seen of them after his*
Resurrection, and spake of the things pertain-
ing to the Kingdom of God; and this, evidently,
 in order to qualify them for the due Discharge
 of the Commission they received from him im-
 mediately before his Ascension into Heaven, *Go*
 Matt. xxviii. 19, *ye, and teach all Nations. —Go into all the*
 20. *World, and preach the Gospel to every Crea-*
 Mark xvi. 15. *ture, teaching them to observe all things what-*
soever I have commanded you.

III. *The Apostles, in virtue of their Com-*
mission from Christ, being not only to testify and
deliver to the World the things which they had
seen and had been taught by Him, but further to
open and explain the Gospel Dispensation; were
under the Guidance and Assistance of the Holy
Ghost, which they received according to his Pro-
mise, before they enter'd upon their Ministry.

The frequent Assurances they had from our
 Saviour that they should receive the Holy
 Ghost, are distinctly recorded in the four Evan-
 gelists; the Truth and Authority of whose
 Writings is fully shewn under the first Head.
 But because the Proof of their having this, and
 several other Promises of our Saviour, punctu-
 ally fulfill'd to them, do all depend upon Te-
 stimonies fetch'd from the *Acts of the Apostles*;
 it will be proper in this Place to establish the
 Credit

Credit of that History, in the same manner that the Credit of the four Evangelists has been already establish'd. And that the Writer of it was *Luke* the Evangelist, appears evidently by comparing the Introduction to his Gospel with that of the Acts. The Gospel begins thus: *Luk. i. 1.*

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in Order a Declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the Beginning were Eye-Witnesses and Ministers of the Word : It seem'd good to me also, having had perfect Understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus. With express Reference to this, the Acts of the Apostles begin thus: *The Acts i. 1.*

The former Treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the Day in which he was taken up, &c.

After this, by a visible Connection of the History, he proceeds to relate what the Apostles did, immediately after our Saviour's Ascension; so that no doubt has ever been made, but that the same Person was the Writer of both. That he was well qualified to write his Gospel, has been already shewn under the first Head; and the Evidences there laid down, conclude yet more strongly for the Authority of the *Acts of the Apostles*; of many of which Acts, we are sure, he himself was an Eye and Ear-Witness. *Acts xvi, &c.*

Citations out of this Book are found in *Clement* the Companion of St. Paul, and in *Polycarp*, the Disciple of St. John. *Irenæus*, in the second Century, writing against the heretical Doctrine of two Principles (one Good, the other Evil) argues throughout one whole Chapter, from Passages taken at large out of the Book

Acts xvi, &c.

Clem. Ep. ad Corinth. S. 18.

Polycarp ad Philip. S. 1.

Iren. l. 3. c. 12.

of *Acts*, to shew the Contrariety of that Heresy to the Doctrine of the Apostles. *Eusebius* gives an Account of the same Book as follows :
“ Luke, a native of Antioch, and a Physician by Profession, who had lived long and intimately with Paul, and was much conversant with the other Apostles, left two Books, written by Divine Inspiration; one of them, his Gospel—the other entitled, The Acts of the Apostles; which he did not write from the Relations of others, but as Facts that he saw with his own Eyes.” And elsewhere, among the Books which were universally received, he reckons the *Acts of the Apostles* next to the four Evangelists.

Having establish'd the Credit and Authority of those Writings which testify the Promise of the Holy Ghost, and the Mission thereof according to that Promise; I will now proceed to shew from the Evangelists, upon what Occasions and for what Ends the Promise was made. Our Saviour tells his Disciples, a little before his Death, *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now; and then he immediately adds, Howbeit, when he the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all Truth: Agreeably to what he had told them a little before; These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you: But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your Remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Again, I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth: And, When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth*

Euseb. l. 3.
c. 4.

Euseb. l. 3.
c. 25.

Joh. xvi.
12, 13.

Joh. xiv.
26, 27.

Joh. xiv.
16, 17.

Joh. xv.
26.

proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. When he tells them, they must be brought Luk. xii. 11, 12.
into the Synagogues, and unto Magistrates and Powers, he bids them take no Thought how or what thing they shall answer, or what they shall say; and then adds, For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same Hour what ye ought to say: And, I will give you a Mouth and Wis- Luk. xxi. 15.
dom, which all your Adversaries shall not be Joh. xvi. 6, 7.
able to gainsay nor resist. When he sees them in Trouble, and finds that Sorrow had fill'd their Hearts at the Thoughts of his leaving them, he comforts them thus: I tell you the Truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. When he had given them their Commission to preach the Gospel unto all Nations, he immediately adds, And behold I send the Promise of my Luk. xxiv. 49.
Father upon you; but tarry ye in the City of Acts i. 4.
Jerusalem, until ye be endued with Power
from on High: And, Ye shall receive Power, Acts i. 8.
after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be Witnesses unto Me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost Part of the Earth. This Promise Acts ii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 7.
was fulfill'd on the Day of Pentecost, when they were all with one Accord in one Place, and suddenly there came a Sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty Wind, and fill'd all the House where they were sitting: And there appear'd unto them cloven Tongues, like as of Fire, and it sat upon each of them: And they were all fill'd with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them Utterance. And there being at that time

devout Men out of every Nation who were come to *Jerusalem* to worship, every one heard them speak in his own Language wherein he was born. And while the People stand amaz'd
 Acts ii. 33. at this, St. Peter tells them, That *Jesus whom they had crucified, being raised from the Dead, and by the right Hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the Promise of the Holy Ghost, had shed forth that which they now saw and heard.*

It appears by these Accounts, that the full and final Opening of the Gospel-Dispensation, was to be the Work of the *Holy Ghost*, directing the Apostles, and strengthening them in their Ministry, and enabling them by his Gifts to convey the Knowledge of it to all Nations, and to confirm it with undoubted Testimonies of a divine Commission and Authority. Whatever they had *heard* from Christ, or *seen* him do, the Holy Ghost brought fresh again to their Remembrance; the Truths which they could not bear in their more imperfect State, the Holy Ghost instructed them in, and made them fully apprehend; and *by leading them into all Truth*, he effectually secured them against *all Error*. They were to preach the Gospel to *all Nations*, and he taught them the Languages of *all*. In the Course of their Ministry, they were to meet with great Trouble, Difficulty, and Persecution; and he inspired and supported them with suitable Supplies of Wisdom, Courage and Comfort. Thus encouraged, strengthened, and assisted, by the Holy Ghost, the Apostles *went forth and preach'd every where; the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with Signs following*; or, as it is elsewhere express'd, *God bearing them Witness, both*
 with

Mark xvi.

20.

Heb. ii. 4.

with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost. This is affirm'd on many Occasions; first, of all the Apostles in general, while they continued together at Jerusalem, That many Wonders and Signs were done by their Hands. — That with great Power they gave Witness to the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus. — That by the Hands of the Apostles were many Signs and Wonders wrought among the People: That there came a Multitude out of the Cities round about Jerusalem, bringing Sick Folks, and them which were vexed with unclean Spirits, and they were healed every one: And then, as wrought by particular Apostles; by Peter, in the extraordinary Act of Power exercised upon Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Ghost; by Peter and John, who upon the Occasion of curing a Man that was lame from his Mother's Womb, declared by what Power they and the other Apostles effected their miraculous Cures; In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk; And, Be it known unto you, and to all the People of Israel, that by the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the Dead, by him doth this Man stand here before you whole: And St. Peter (upon his curing Æneas of the Palsy) Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole.

Acts ii. 43.

Acts iv. 33.

Acts v. 12.

Acts v. 16.

Acts v. 5,

10.

Acts iii. 6.

Acts viii.

6, 7, 13.

— ix. 32,

35, 39, 40.

Acts iv. 10.

Acts ix. 34.

Nor had the Apostles only the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, and of Tongues and Miracles, bestowed upon them, but these Powers were also by their Ministry conferred upon others. Our Saviour intimated, that Believers should receive Gifts of an extraordinary Nature; for St. John repeating what he had said concerning Rivers of Water that should flow out of him,

Joh vii. 39

Joh. xiv.
12.

adds, *This spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified: and so our Saviour himself, Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the Works that I do shall he do also, and greater Works than these; because I go unto my Father. And it is certain in Fact, that by Prayer, and laying on of Hands, the Gifts of the Holy Ghost were bestowed by the Apostles upon many of the Believers. After Peter and John had related to the Brethren at Jerusalem, the Threatnings of the High Priests and Council of the Jews, it follows, And now,*

Acts iv.

29, 30, 31.

Lord, behold their Threatnings, and grant unto thy Servants, that with all Boldness they may speak thy Word, by stretching forth thy Hand to heal, and that Signs and Wonders may be done by the Name of thy holy Child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the Place was shaken where they were assembled, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

Acts viii.

14, 15, 17.

Again, when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem, heard that Samaria had received the Word of God (by the preaching of Philip the Evangelist) they sent unto them Peter and John, who when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost; then laid they their Hands on them, and they

Acts x. 44,

46.

received the Holy Ghost. While Peter was speaking to Cornelius and his Company, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word, and they heard them speak with Tongues and magnify God. To these we may add the Instances of Stephen and Philip, two of the seven Deacons; of the first of whom it is

Acts vi. 8.

said, that he did great Wonders and Miracles among

among the People; and of the second, that Simon Magus himself wondered when he heard Acts viii. 7.
unclean Spirits crying with loud Voices, and 13.
saw those who were possessed with them cured, and many taken with Palsies and that were lame, healed.

There is one Thing further observable, concerning the Miracles wrought by the Apostles and others, in Testimony of their divine Mission; and that is, The numerous Conversions to the Christian Faith which were made by them. Upon hearing the Apostles speak all Sorts of Tongues on the Day of Pentecost, *there were* Acts ii. 41.
added to them above three Thousand Souls: Acts iv. 4.
 Upon the Cure of the lame Man by Peter and John, and the Occasion they took from thence to recommend and enforce the Doctrine of the Gospel, *many of them which heard the Word believed, and the Number of the Men was about five* Acts v. 12.
Thousand: Upon the many Signs and Wonders 14.
which were wrought by the Apostles among the People, Believers were the more added to the Lord, Multitudes both of Men and Women: Upon Philip's preaching the Gospel at Samaria, the People with one Accord gave heed unto those Acts viii. 6.
Things which he spake; hearing and seeing the Miracles which he did; and even Simon, he who had bewitched them with his Sorceries, Acts viii.
and to whom they had all given heed from the 9, 10, 13.
highest to the lowest as the great Power of God, was baptized, and continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the Miracles and Signs which were done.

Thus far, of the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord; of the Commission they had from him to preach the Gospel, and their Qualifications
 for

for the effectual Discharge of that Commission, by the Instructions they received from his own Mouth, by the further Lights which the Holy Ghost gave them, and by the Gift of Tongues and the Power of Miracles, to enable them to *propagate* and *establisth* the Truths they preach'd.

But as St. Paul also was a glorious Instrument in carrying on that great Work, and both his *Commission* and *Instructions* were conveyed in a Method different from the rest, it will be necessary to give a particular Account of both, in order to lay a sure Foundation for the Authority of the several Epistles

Acts ix. 3.

—xxii. 3.

—xxvi. 12.

written by him. The Account of his miraculous Conversion is delivered by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, and by himself in the same Book, in his two Defences before *Lysias* and *Festus*, first at *Jerusalem*, and then at *Cæsarea*. And his *immediate Mission* from Christ is thus

Acts xxvi.

16, 17, 18.

I have appeared unto thee for this Purpose, to make thee a Minister and a Witness both of these Things which thou hast seen, and of those Things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the People, and

Acts xxii.

21.

from the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee, To open their Eyes, and to turn them from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God. And so Ananias, to whom he was directed by the heavenly Vision, relates what Christ had revealed to him concerning

Acts ix. 15.

Paul; He is a chosen Vessel unto me, to bear my Name before the Gentiles, and Kings, and the Children of Israel: And, The Lord, even

Acts ix. 17.

Jesus that appeared unto thee in the Way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy Sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And again, The God of our Fathers

Acts xxii.

14, 15.

hath

*hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his Will, and see that Just one, and shouldest hear the Voice of his Mouth: For thou shalt be his Witness unto all Men, of what thou hast seen and heard. And whereas the other Apostles style themselves, in the Beginning of their Epistles, the Servants and the Apostles of Christ, St. Paul's Style concerning himself is, Called to be an Apostle, — Separated unto the Gospel of God — An Apostle of Jesus Christ by the Will of God; and, * An Apostle not of Man, neither by Man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father. And as to his Doctrine, he tells the Corinthians on Occasion of his speaking of the Institution of the last Supper, I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you; and speaking of the Death and Resurrection of Christ, I delivered unto you that which I also received; and of his Doctrine in General, The Gospel which was preached of me, was not of Man; for I neither received it of Man, neither was I taught it, but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Rom. i. 1.

1 Cor. i. 1.

2 Cor. i. 1.

Ephes. i. 1.

Colos. i. 1.

2 Tim. i. 1.

* Gal. i. 1.

1 Cor. xi.

23.

1 Cor. xv.

3.

Gal. i. 11,

12.

Acts xiv. 3.

Acts xix.

11, 12.

To this Account of his Mission and Doctrine, we must add, that both were justified and confirmed by many and great Miracles. It is said of Paul and Barnabas when at Iconium, Long time therefore abode they, speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave Testimony to the Word of his Grace, and granted Signs and Wonders to be done by their Hands; and at Ephesus, God wrought special Miracles by the Hands of Paul; so that from his Body were brought unto the Sick, Handkerchiefs or Aprons, and the Diseases departed from them and the evil Spirits went out of them. In Cyprus, an Act of Extraordinary Power was exercised on Elymas the Sorcerer,

- Acts xiii. 10, 11. Sorcerer, whom *Paul*, moved by the Holy Ghost, struck with *Blindness* for endeavouring to turn away the Deputy from the Faith. At *Lystra*, he commanded the lame Man to stand upright on his Feet, and he leaped and walked.
- Acts xiv. 8. At *Philippi*, where was a Damsel possessed with a Spirit of Divination, *Paul* said to the Spirit, I command thee in the Name of Jesus Christ to come out of her, and he came out the same Hour. In *Melita*, the Father of the chief Man of the Island lay sick of a Fever and a Bloody Flux;
- Acts xxviii. 8, 9. To whom *Paul* enter'd in, and laid his Hands on him and healed him: And, when this was done, others also who had Diseases in the Island, came and were healed. And for the Success of his Ministry, thus supported and enforced by the Testimony of Miracles, we may appeal, not only to the particular Conversions mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as the Effects of them,
- Acts xiii. 12. —xiv. 14. —xvi. 33. but to the Number of Churches which were founded by him; many of them in some of the most populous Cities and Countries.

One thing more I must observe, That as the rest of the Apostles had the Power of conferring the Gifts of the Holy Ghost upon others, so *Paul* had the same Power: For it is said of the Converts to Christianity whom he found at *Ephesus*, That when he had laid his Hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with Tongues, and prophesied.

Acts xix. 6.

IV. What the things are relating to the Gospel Dispensation, which the Apostles were to open and explain, pursuant to the Commission and Instruction received from Christ, and under the Guidance and Assistance of the Holy Ghost; must, in Conjunction with the Gospels, be learnt from

from

from their Preaching and Writings, as delivered to us in their Acts and Epistles. Some of the Doctrines, which they were charged by Christ to deliver to the World, are recorded in the four Gospels, as being Part of the Instructions they received from himself; but as it is very certain that all the Instructions which he delivered to his Disciples are not recorded in the Gospels, so is it no less certain, that many of the Things which he did deliver to them during the Course of his Ministry, were delivered in an obscure Manner, and not understood by them at the Time; particularly, those relating to the Nature of his Kingdom, his Death, and his Resurrection. His ordinary Way of teaching the People, was by Parables. All these Things spake Jesus to the Multitude in Parables, and without a Parable spake he not unto them; — With many such Parables spake he the Word unto them, as they were able to hear it; but without a Parable spake he not unto them. 'Tis added indeed, that when they were alone, he expounded all Things to his Disciples; but they so little understood them, that, as I observed before, he often upbraids them with their Slowness of Apprehension and Want of Faith; and, of those Expositions, but few are recorded. A little before his Death, he tells them, I have yet many Things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now; and then he immediately adds, Howbeit when the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you unto all Truth; where he evidently leaves the many Things he had to say, which they could not then bear, to be revealed to them by the Holy Ghost, who was also to bring to their Remembrance all

Matt. xiii.
34.
Mark iv.
33, 34.
Pag. 20.
John xvi.
12, 13.
E that

that he himself had delivered to them. After his Resurrection, he was seen of the Apostles *forty Days, speaking of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God*; but what the Things were that he delivered to them in those forty Days, is no where recorded. Nor indeed could the great Work of the Redemption of Mankind, which mainly depended upon his *dying and rising again*, be set forth and explained, till after his Resurrection; when, upon Occasion of their Doubts concerning the Reality of it, Luke xxiv. he showed them out of *Moses and the Prophets* and the *Psalms*, that he was to suffer and rise again, and *opened their Understandings that they might understand the Scriptures*. I will only add as to St. Paul, that the same Doctrines which were conveyed to the other Apostles, first by the Teaching of Christ, and then by the Light and Direction of the Holy Ghost, were fully made known to him by immediate Revelation. See before, p. 30.

The Apostles being thus instructed in the whole Will of Christ, were properly his *Messengers*, to convey and deliver it to the World (*As my Father hath sent me, so send I you — Go ye unto all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature, — Teaching them to observe all Things whatsoever I have commanded you.*) And from whom are we to learn the Will of Christ, but from his own *Messengers*, whom he fully instructed in it, and intrusted with the delivering it to the World? They were the *Ambassadors of Christ to pray us in his Stead to be reconciled to God*; and from whom therefore, but from them, are we to learn the *Terms* of that Reconciliation, and the *Grounds* of that great Favour and Mercy extended by God

John xx.
21.

Mark xvi.
15.

Mat. xxviii.
20.

2 Cor. v.
20.

God to Mankind? They were in a particular Manner appointed to be Witnesses of his *Resurrection*; and from what other Hands, but these that were intrusted with publishing the Doctrine of the Resurrection, can we learn the Importance of it, and the Benefits accruing to Mankind by it? Those Ambassadors and Messengers were endowed with the Power of working *Miracles*; and for what End should this be, but to prove the Divinity of their Commission, and to recommend their Doctrines to our Attention and Belief? In general, the Apostles were appointed by Christ to be *the Light of the World*; and how was that Light to be conveyed to future Generations, otherwise than by their Preachings and Writings?

Supposing then that the Writings of the Apostles, and the Accounts we have of their Preaching, are true and genuine, *i. e.* that they were really written by the Persons whose Names they bear; no Doubt can remain, but that the Things relating to the Gospel Dispensation (which were to be opened and explained by them, pursuant to the Instructions received from Christ, and under the Direction of the Holy Ghost) are to be learnt from their Acts and Epistles, in Conjunction with the four Gospels. The Authority of the *Gospels* and the *Acts of the Apostles* I have already established, and shall now proceed to show, that the EPISTLES also were the genuine Writings of the Apostles.

Eusebius reckoning up the Books of the New Testament which were *universally* received, after Mention made of the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, adds, '*Next to these we are to reckon the Epistles of Paul;*' every one

Acts i. 22.

—v. 32.

—x. 41.

Matt. v.

14.

Euseb. l. 3.

c. 25.

of which (except that to the *Hebrews*) expressly bears his Name ; and they are frequently cited and referred to by the most early Writers of the Church, as has been abundantly shewn by many learned Men, and may easily be seen by looking into the Writings of *Clement*, *Ignatius* and *Polycarp* in the first Century, and after them into those of *Irenæus* and *Tertullian* in the second. The same Thing is there affirmed by *Eusebius*, of the first Epistle of St. *Peter*, and the first of St. *John* ; namely, that they had been received universally. And as to the Doubts that have been raised concerning other Epistles ; it must be premised in general, that no Advantage can accrue from thence to the Adversaries of the Christian Religion, till they point out the particular Doctrines relating to Faith or Manners, which are contained in those, that are not also contained either expressly, or by fair and clear Deduction, in the other Books of the New Testament, which the Church of Christ has universally received. Much less can they reap any Advantage from those Doubts, if it shall be made appear that in every Instance they are ill founded.

As to the Epistle to the *HEBREWS* ; the main Doubt concerning it has arisen from its not being expressly under the Name of St. *Paul*, as all his other Epistles are ; but this receives a very plain and natural Solution. St. *Paul* was properly the Apostle of the *Gentiles*, as appears from many Passages both in the Book of *Acts*, and in his own Epistles. The Direction he received from Christ was this, *Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy Testimony concerning me ; and, Depart, for I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles.*

Gentiles. In his Epistles he speaks of himself Rom. xi. 13. as the *Apostle of the Gentiles*, as the *Minister* —xv. 16. of *Jesus Christ to the Gentiles*, and as the *Pri-* Gal. i. 16. *soner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles*; as he, to Ephes. iii. 8. whom it pleased God to reveal his Son, that he might preach him among the Heathen; he, to whom this Grace or Commission was given, that 2 Tim. i. 11. he should preach among the Gentiles; he, who was appointed a Teacher of the Gentiles; he, 2 Tim. iv. 17. whom the Lord strengthened, that by him the Preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear. All which are briefly comprehended in the Declaration he made to Gal. ii. 7. the Galatians; The Gospel of the Uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the Gospel of the Circumcision was unto Peter; for he that wrought effectually in Peter to the Apostleship of the Circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles. 'Tis true, the Apostolical Commission was general, 'To preach the Gospel,' and there are many Instances of St. Paul's endeavouring to convert those of the Jewish Nation, and of his going into their Synagogues, and reasoning with them. This he did at *Salamis*, at *Iconium*, at *Thessalonica*, at *Berea*, at *Corinth*, and at *Ephesus*. At *Thessalonica*, particularly, it is said that Paul, as his Acts xiii. —xiii. 1. —xiv. 1. —xvii. 1. —xvii. 1. —xviii. —xviii. 1. Manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath Days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures: At *Ephesus*, he went into the Synagogue, and spake boldly for the Space of three Months, disputing and persuading the Things concerning the Kingdom of God: And he tells —xix. 8. —xx. 2. the Elders of that Church, That he had testified both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. And at *Antioch*, where —xviii. the

the Jews contradicted and blasphemed, he tells them, *It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to them; but seeing they put it from them, and judged themselves unworthy of everlasting Life, he turned to the Gentiles.* And to how great a Height the Prejudices of the Jews against him had risen by degrees, we may gather from the furious Assault that was made upon him at Jerusalem, and their crying out, *Men of Israel, help; this is the Man, that teacheth all Men every where against the People and the Law, and this Place;* while his Affection to the whole Jewish Nation, and his Concern for them was such, as to make him even wish that himself were accursed from Christ, for his Brethren, his Kinsmen according to the Flesh.

Acts xxi.
28.

Rom. ix. 3.

2 Cor. xi.
12.

It appears from the foregoing Accounts, how natural it was for St. Paul to write as well as preach to the Jews; and how natural also, in writing to them, to avoid the *Authoritative* Style that he used when he wrote to those Churches which had been converted by him, or which were more peculiarly within his Commission, and to chuse to write to them only as his *Brethren* and *Kinsmen*, that is, in his own Language, as he and they were equally *Hebrews*, and *Israelites*, and the *Seed of Abraham*.

But, notwithstanding the Omission of his Name, and of his Apostolical Character, there are many cogent Arguments to satisfy us, that St. Paul was the Author of this Epistle, against the contrary Suspicions of some learned Men. The general Scope of it is to prove, that the Rites prescribed by the Ceremonial Law, were only *Types* and *Figures* of Christ, and that He being now come, they were of no further Use, but

but were to cease and give Way to a Dispensation of a much higher and more excellent Nature. And what was the Accusation brought against St. Paul by the Jews? Why, *That he taught all the Jews which were among the Gentiles, to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their Children, neither to walk after the Customs; and, That he taught all Men every where against the People and the Law, and the Temple.* — The Writer of this Epistle uses the Style of our Brother Timothy; and this is the Style which we find frequently used by St. Paul in his other Epistles. Paul an Apostle of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our Brother, is the Introduction to three of them; and writing to the *Thessalonians*, he says, *I have sent Timotheus our Brother; nor do we find this Style used by any other of the Apostles.* — The same is observable of another Expression towards the Conclusion of this Epistle, *Pray for us*; being what we also find in his Epistles both to the *Colossians* and *Thessalonians*; with others of the same Import in those to the *Romans* and *Ephesians*, where he beseeches them to *strive together in their Prayers to God for him, and to pray always with all Prayer and Supplication for him*; nor is this used by any other Apostle. — This Epistle, towards the Conclusion, has a solemn Prayer to the God of Peace, for a Blessing upon the Christians to whom he is writing; and we find the like, towards the Conclusion of his Epistle to the *Romans*, *The God of Peace be with you all*; and, to the *Corinthians*, *The God of Love and Peace shall be with you*; to the *Philippians*, *The God of Peace shall be with you*, and to the *Thessalonians*, *The very God of Peace sanctify you wholly*

Acts xxi.
21, 28.

Heb. xiii.
23.

2 Cor. i. 1
Coloss. i.
1.
Philem. i.
1 Thess. ii.
2.

Heb. xiii
18.

Col. iv.
2 Thess. i.
1.

Rom. xv
30.
Ephes. v
18.
Heb. xi
20.

Rom. x
33.
— xvi.
2 Cor.

11.
Phil. iv
1 The
23.

2 Theſſ. iii. 16. *ly, and, The Lord of Peace himſelf give you Peace always*; and the like Expreſſion is not only thus frequent in St. Paul's Epistles, but is not to be met with in any other. — The ſame is to be ſaid of the Term *Mediator*; for tho' the *Thing* be ſpoken of in other Parts of the New Teſtament, the *Term* is not found any where, but in the Writings of St. Paul. — In this Epistle, he ſpeaks of his Imprisonment, under the Name of *Bonds*; and he mentions the ſame at leaſt ten times in his other Epistles, and all of them written from *Italy*, as this to the *Hebrews* was; neither do we find that Expreſſion us'd by any other Apoſtle. — In this Epistle, he pleads the Integrity of his Heart and Conſcience, *We truſt we have a good Conſcience, in all things willing to live honeſtly*; and the ſame Plea is often made by him on other Occaſions: Thus his Declaration before the Council was, *Men and Brethren, I have lived in all good Conſcience before God until this Day*; and before Felix, *Herein do I exerciſe my ſelf, to have always a Conſcience void of Offence towards God and towards Men*; and in his Epistle to the Romans, *I ſay the Truth in Chriſt, I lie not, my Conſcience alſo bearing me Witneſs*; to the Corinthians, ſpeaking of himſelf, *Our Rejoycing is this, the Teſtimony of our Conſcience*; and to Timothy, *Whom I ſerve with pure Conſcience*. — This Epistle concludes with a *Salutation* to and from the Brethren; which is found at the End of almoſt every Epistle of St. Paul; and the Chriſtians are here called *Saints*, which is a Style very frequently uſed by that Apoſtle, and almoſt peculiar to him.

To this Epistle St. *Peter* may well be under-2 Pet. iii. stood to refer as written by St. *Paul*, where^{15, 16.} he is exhorting the Jewish Christians under Persecution, to wait with Patience for the *Day of the Lord*, and to take care to be found of him *without Spot and blameless*, that it might be *Salvation* to them; and this, in answer to the Scoffers of those Days, who upbraided them with the *Expectation* of it, as vain and groundless, and, by way of Derision, ask'd, *Where is the Promise of his Coming?* And then St. *Peter* adds, *Even as our beloved Brother Paul also, according to the Wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you*; which most probably relates to this Epistle, as the *only one* that he wrote to the Jewish Christians, and as containing in it several Exhortations to the same Purpose with that which St. *Peter* is there giving. For, not to insist upon his Exhortation to the *Hebrews*, to be Followers of^{Heb. vi.} them who through Faith and Patience inherited the^{12, 15.} Promises, enforced by the Example of *Abraham*, who after he had patiently endured, obtain'd the Promise; nor upon that other Exhortation, *Let*^{Heb. x.} us hold fast the Profession of our Faith without^{23.} wavering, for he is faithful that promised; not, I say, to rest upon these, it will be hard to find in the whole New Testament any Passage to which St. *Peter* might so probably refer, as this which follows: *Cast not away your Confi-*^{Heb. x.} dence, which hath great Recompence of Re-34, 35, 36. ward: For ye have need of Patience, that after ye have done the Will of God, ye might receive the Promise: For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry: Now, the Just shall live by Faith; but if any Man draw back, my Soul shall have no Pleasure in him: But we are not of them who draw back unto Perdition,

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Rom. ii. 4. *but of them that believe to the Saving of the Soul.* As to the Passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, which speaks of the Goodness and Forbearance and Long-suffering of God, as leading to Repentance; St. Peter cannot be supposed to refer to it, for two plain Reasons. In that Passage, St. Paul Addresses himself to the Unbelieving Jews; whereas St. Peter is writing to the Believing Jews, and to them only. St. Paul's is a Reproof for abusing the Goodness and Long-suffering of God to a Security in sinning, contrary to the Effect it ought to have upon wicked Men; but St. Peter's is an Exhortation to sincere Christians to wait with Patience, in an Assurance that it will bring Salvation in the End.

Under the present Head of *Internal Testimony*, Notice must be taken of a Passage in this Epistle, which may seem at first sight to imply, that St. Paul was not the Writer of it. Speaking of the Salvation of Sinners through the Gospel, he says, *Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirm'd unto Us by them that heard him*; whereas St. Paul had the Gospel reveal'd to him immediately from Heaven. But to this there are two plain Answers: One, That St. Paul, between his Conversion and the Time when this Epistle was written, had seen and convers'd with several of the Apostles. *After three Years*, says he, *I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen Days*; and he tells us, that at the same time he saw James, the Brother of our Lord. — *Then, fourteen Years after I went up to Jerusalem*, — *and communicated to them that Gospel which I preach'd among the Gentiles*; and there he saw Peter, James, and John, and after that he saw Peter

Gal. i. 18, 19.
Gal. ii. 1, 9, 11.

Peter at Antioch. So that St. Paul might truly say, that the Doctrine of the Gospel was confirm'd to him by them that heard Christ; and he had *Occasion* to say it, lest it should be objected to him by the Jewish Christians, that his Doctrine was different from that of the other Apostles; against whom it was a proper Defence, that it was no other Doctrine than that which had been confirm'd by their own Apostles, who heard Christ, and had at first preached the Gospel to them. The other Answer is, that it is not uncommon with St. Paul to include himself in the Number of those to whom he writes, tho' not concern'd equally with them, or not at all: *Let us not commit Fornication.* — 1 Cor. x. *Let us not tempt Christ.* — We ourselves (speaking of the Gentile State) were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers Lusts and Pleasures, living in Malice and Envy, hateful, and hating one another. ^{8, 9.} Tit. iii. 3.

Besides the *Internal* Proofs that St. Paul was the Writer of this Epistle, there are Proofs *External*, and those both numerous and express. Not to mention in this Place the Citations of the *most early* Fathers out of this Epistle, as being only Proofs of the Authority, and not of the Author, and made by Writers who rarely mention the *Name* of the Apostle whose Words they cite: In the second Century, *Clemens Alexan-* Clem
drinus mentions it under the Name of St. Paul, Alex.
where speaking of the *Greek Philosophy*, as Strom.
styl'd by that Apostle, *Elements or Introductions* 1. 6. § 8.
to the Truth, and expressly mentioning him by Col. ii. 8.
Name, he adds, *And therefore writing to the Hebrews, he saith, Ye have need that one teach you* Heb. v.
again, which be the Elements (or first Principles) 12.
of the Oracles of God. And elsewhere, having

Clem. cited a Passage of St. Paul's Epistle to Titus
 Alex. concerning the Behaviour of the elder Women
 Strom. in Quietness and Sobriety, *that the Word of God*
 l. 4. § 20. *be not blasphemed*, he immediately adds, *But*
 Heb. xii. *rather, says the same Apostle, follow Peace with*
 13, 14, 15. *all Men, &c.* repeating four Verses of the E-
 — xiii. 4. pistle to the *Hebrews*. So also Origen, in the
 Orig. third Century, having quoted these Words out
 Cels. l. 3. of St. Paul's Epistle to the *Corinthians*, *I have*
 p. 143. *fed you with Milk, and not with Meat*, adds this;
 1 Cor. iii. *The same Person saith, Ye are become such as have*
 2. *need of Milk, and not of strong Meat*, and then he
 Heb. v. goes on to repeat two other entire Verses out
 12, 13, 14. of this Epistle to the *Hebrews*. And elsewhere,
 Heb. x. having cited Passages out of the other Epistles
 32, 35. of St. Paul, he adds parallel Passages out of
 Orig. Phi- the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, with this or the
 local. p. like Connection, *The same Apostle saith*. In his
 10, 17. Homilies upon this Epistle he accounts for the
 adv. Cels. Difference between it and St. Paul's other E-
 l. 7. p. pistles in point of Style, by supposing that the
 351. *and* Matter was his, but that it was compos'd and
 in other *methodiz'd* by some other Hand. And there-
 Places. fore he *commends those Churches which receiv'd*
 Euseb. *it as St. Paul's*, because, as he adds, *the An-*
 l. 6. c. 25. *tients did not ascribe it to him rashly*. And that
 which follows, of some of the Antients ascrib-
 ing it to St. Clement, and some to St. Luke, evi-
 dently refers to the suppos'd *Penman*, and not
 to the *Author*; to the Language only, and not
 at all to the Matter.

In the next Century, the Council of *Laodicea*
 enumerating the known and received Books of
 the New Testament, place in their Course
 Concil. *The fourteen Epistles of St. Paul*; to the *Romans*
 Laod. *one*, to the *Corinthians two*, &c. *and to the He-*
 Can. 60. *brews one*: To which I will add the Testimonies
 of

of two Writers, one of the *Greek* and the other of the *Latin* Church, I mean *Eusebius* and *Jerome*; who had made more nice and strict Enquiries than any other about the Books of the Old and New Testament, and the Writers of them. *Eusebius*, speaking of the received Books of the New Testament, deliver'd his own Judgment, *That the fourteen Epistles of St. Paul* [*which includes that to the Hebrews*] *are known and clear.* Euseb. l. 3. c. 3. — l. 6. c. 20. Afterwards, speaking of *Clement's* Epistle to the *Corinthians*, in which, says he, *are inserted several Passages out of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and sometimes in the very Words,* he adds, '*From whence it is most evident, that this cannot be a modern Writing* [*St. Clement having been a Disciple and Companion of St. Paul,*] and then he goes on, '*Wherefore it seems with good Reason to be added to his other Epistles. For St. Paul having written to the Hebrews in their own Language, the Translation of it* [*into the Greek Tongue*] *is ascrib'd by some to St. Luke, and by others to Clement.* Which Testimonies warrant what we find in *Theodoret*, in the Preface to his Commentary upon this Epistle, *Eusebius confess'd, that this was the Epistle of the most divine Paul, and affirm'd, that all the Ancients were of that Opinion*; And *Photius* a Collector in the ninth Century, at the same time that he cites an obscure Writer who had said that *Hippolytus* and *Irenæus* did not believe this Epistle to be *St. Paul's*, immediately adds, *But Clement, and Eusebius, and the main Body of the divine Fathers, reckon this among his other Epistles.* And the same *Photius* mentions that Opinion of *Hippolytus*, as one, among others, of his crude and indigested Assertions. Theodoret. Pref. Phot. Bibl. Cod. 23. Gobaru. Phot. Bibl. c. 121.

'Tis true, *Eusebius* takes Notice, that some did

Euseb. not l. 3. c.

not receive the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, because they said it was not receiv'd by the *Roman Church*; which he particularly affirms of *Caius*, and adds, in a more qualified Sense, *That some of the Romans did not suppose it to be his*. But it must be remember'd, that *Caius* advanc'd this Opinion in a Dispute with one, who affirm'd that Christians *falling* from the Faith, ought not to be admitted to Penance, and who, without doubt, alledged against *Caius* that Passage in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*: *It is impossible for those who were once enlighten'd, and have tasted of the heavenly Gift, and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the Power of the World to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again to Repentance*. And as this became a common Controversy in the *Latin Church*, which maintain'd the Opinion of *Caius* for restoring lapsed Christians, against the *Montanists* first, and then against the *Novatians*; it was natural, in the Heat of Dispute, to endeavour to weaken the Force of that Text, by raising a Doubt whether *St. Paul*, whose Name was not set to this Epistle as it is to the rest, was the Author of it. But, that the Doubts were not the same in the *Latin Church* from the Beginning, may be fairly presum'd from this Epistle's being inserted among the others, without any Appearance of Distinction, in the ancient *Latin Version* of the New Testament, which was made for the Use of that Church.

St. Jerome, who occasionally takes Notice, that tho' it was receiv'd as *St. Paul's* by some of the *Latin Church*, yet many doubted of it; expressly condemns them for it, and confronts that Doubt with the Authority of *the Greek Church and all the Eastern Churches, who unanimously*

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Proclus.

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Heb. vi.

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nimously receiv'd it ; and who, undoubtedly, had a better Opportunity than the *Latin Church*, to enquire into the Authority of it. Which Determination, as of a Point in Question before him, makes it plain, that his mentioning it with Tokens of Doubt in some other Places where he only quotes it *occasionally*, was not the Result of his own Judgment, but a Deference he paid to the Opinion of the *Latin Church*. And as He expressly declar'd his own Satisfaction, upon the Authority of the Ancients, ' That it was rightly ascrib'd to St. *Paul*,' so has the whole *Latin Church* shewn themselves to be convinced of their Error, by having for so many Ages receiv'd and inserted it among his other Epistles. Mill.

That which gave the main Ground of Dispute concerning the Writer of this Epistle, was the want of St. *Paul's* Name at the Beginning, which has been already accounted for ; and this led the Critical Enquirers into *Words* and *Phrases*, to insist upon the Argument from the *Stile* and *Manner* of writing in this Epistle, as different from that of St. *Paul* in his other Epistles. The Manner of Writing, say they, is more lofty, and the Stile rais'd to a greater Height, than in his other Epistles. But if it be, the Subject also is more lofty and exalted. ' The Dignity of Christ above the Angels, ' The Glory of Christ at the Right-hand of God, ' The heavenly Tabernacle, ' The everlasting Priesthood, ' Christ's mediating and interceding for us in the Presence of God ; ' And, in general, all those high and heavenly Things, of which the legal Performances under the Mosaical Law were only Types and Figures ; together with the *Wonders* wrought by the Patriarchs, Martyrs, and other famous Men, in vertue of their Faith. As therefore the Difference

ference in Stile is of little Force in any Case, since it is very common for the same Writer to vary his Stile, according to the Subject, the Occasion, the Degrees of Earnestness, &c. so here it is of no Force at all, when set up in Opposition to the Testimony of the best and most approved Writers among the Ancients; and when it is further consider'd, that all Attempts to ascribe the Epistle to ~~any~~ others (*Luke, Barnabas, Clement, or Apollos*) are founded only upon some remote Conjectures, and not countenanc'd by ancient Testimonies; otherwise than as they are consider'd under the Character of *Writers* and *Reporters* of *St. Paul's* Doctrine. To which I must add, that those early Differences in Opinion were not so much about the *Authority* of the Book, as about the Author; they who had their Doubts whether *St. Paul* was the Writer, readily acknowledging that the Epistle came from a Person *divinely inspired*. This was the Case with all those of old, who believed it to be written in *Hebrew* by *St. Paul*, and translated into *Greek* by some one of the Apostolical Persons just now mention'd (which, whether true or not, was a prevailing Opinion among the Ancients;) and also with those others, who supposed it to be drawn up by some Apostolical Person, agreeably to the *Sense* and *Meaning* of *St. Paul*. And the same has been the Case with more modern Writers; as appears by the Declarations of two Divines (both of them remarkable for a *Latitude* of Thought in religious Matters) even while they are giving their Reasons, why they do not think it to have been written by *St. Paul*. *It does not seem, says one, to have been written by St. Paul, but neither can it be clearly deny'd to be his. For 'tis probable, it was written*

See be-
fore, p. 43.

Limbourg.
ref. to
Comment.
pon
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written by one of St. Paul's Companions, with his Privy, and agreeably to his Doctrine: to which he adds, ' I acknowledge the divine Authority of this Epistle.' And, says another, *Whoever reads it with Attention, will see every where the Apostolical Doctrine concerning the Controversies between the Christians and Jews or Judaizing Christians of those Days; from whence he infers, ' That it must be written before the Destruction of the Temple, because after that, and the Extinction of the Levitical Worship, and the Destruction of a great Part of the Jewish Nation, there could scarce be any Occasion for entering into those Controversies; nor is there in it the least Footstep of any Opinions, Disputes, or Matters, later than the Apostolick Age.'* And again, ' *Neither the Matter, nor the Manner of explaining, nor the Language, breathe any thing but what is Apostolical, and of divine Inspiration; in which, I and all others who have written concerning this Epistle, do agree; however we may differ about the Author.*'

Le Clerc,
Hist. Eccl.
Ann. 69.

Besides this Epistle to the *Hebrews*, there were some others that the whole Christian Church did not receive so soon as those already mentioned concerning which there was never any Doubt. These are, the *Epistle of St. James*, the *Second Epistle of St. Peter*, the *second and third of St. John*, and that of *St. Jude*. Concerning these, it shall be particularly shown, that each of them was received *early*; and there is this plain Reason, why they were not received by all Christians *so early* as the rest, That they were written either to particular Persons, as the second and third of *St. John*, or to the Jewish Converts *dispersed* in several Countries, as the second of *St. Peter* and *St. James*,

Pag. 35.

or to the Christians in general, as the Epistle of St. *Jude*. And since the Satisfaction to be given to particular Churches that they were genuine, depended upon the View of the original Letters, and of the Evidence of those who carried and those who received them ; it is manifest at first sight, that this Satisfaction might be had much more readily, when it was known to what particular Churches this or that Epistle was directed, and where the Originals remained, and both the Messenger and they who received it from his hands might be spoke with ; than it could be had where the Epistles were directed to Christians in general as dispersed throughout the Empire, and while it remained uncertain, in what particular City or Country either the Originals or the Evidences of their being so were to be met with. The not receiving these so early and universally as the rest, is an Argument of the Care taken by particular Churches to be *thoroughly* satisfied, that what they admitted was really written by Persons divinely inspired ; and the receiving them so universally as they afterwards did, is as good an Argument that they had received due Satisfaction concerning them. Nor can any possible Reason be assigned, why the whole Christian Church, *Eastern* and *Western*, should for so many Ages have put these Epistles upon the same foot of Authority with the others which had been universally received, but that all ground of doubting was by Degrees removed, and every Church had received full Satisfaction that they were written by the inspired Persons whose Names they bore, or to whom they were ascribed. We find this to be the Case in the fourth Century, when these were received in the *Greek Church* as of
divine

divine Authority by the Council of *Laodicea* ; and forty Years after, the same was solemnly declared to be the Sense of the *Latin* Church in the Decretal Epistle of *Innocent* I. which was also confirmed eighteen Years after by a publick Decree of the Council of *Carthage*.

But long before these solemn and general Recognitions of their Authority, they had been received as genuine and authentick by many Churches as well as Writers. So *Eusebius* says of Euseb. 1. 3. c. 25. them all, “ That however they were reckoned among the *doubtful* Books, they were acknowledged by many.”

But to descend to particulars. The same *Eusebius* says of the Epistle of St. JAMES, That Euseb. 1. 2. c. 23. it was publickly read in *very many* Churches, together with the others. And two peculiar Reasons may be assigned why it was thought spurious by some, and doubtful by others, and not sooner received by *all* ; one, that tho’ it is expressly under the name of *James*, yet there being *more* Persons of that name spoken of in the New Testament, a Dispute arose to which of them it ought to be ascribed ; and the other, that what he says of the Necessity of *Works* in order to justify Men in the Sight of God, seemed to contradict what St. *Paul* had delivered concerning Justification by Faith alone. And St. *Paul*’s Epistles being universally receiv’d, they who believed or suspected that contrariety in Doctrine, must reject the other of course, or at least suspend their Opinion about it. But as these Doubts vanish’d in particular Churches, and it appeared that St. *Paul* and St. *James* were so far from contradicting each other, that one meant the No-necessity of observing the Ceremonial Law, and the other the Necessity of observing

Ibid.

observing the Moral Law; the one, That *Works* of what kind soever, without Faith, are ineffectual to Salvation, and the other, That Faith *without Works* cannot save; no Scruple was made of putting it upon the same Foot with the other Epistles; in point of Authority.

Euseb. 1. *Eusebius* says, that not many of the Ancients
2. c. 23. mention'd it; and their Silence is already ac-
Jerom de counted for: but *Jerom* tells us, that it obtain'd
Jac. Authority by Degrees, and we find it currently
Mill. cited, like other Scriptures, by the Fathers of
Proleg. p. the fourth Century, and particularly by *Jerom*
24. himself, as written by *James the Apostle*, and the
Jerom Ep. *Brother of our Lord*: So that in the Words of a
ad Paul. learned Commentator, ' *They that doubted of it*
--- Contra before, did in the fourth Century embrace the O-
Jovin. pinion of those that received it; and from thence
c. 24. no Church nor Ecclesiastical Writer ever doubted
of it; but on the contrary, all the Catalogues of the
Books of Scripture, whether publish'd by General
or Provincial Councils, &c. number it among the
Canonical Scriptures."

Euseb. 1. The SECOND Epistle of St. PETER has been
3. c. 25. already observed to be one of those which *Eusebius*
—1. 3. c. 3. mentions as question'd, but which also
—1. 6. were acknowledg'd by many as genuine. And
c. 25. this shows, that when it is said by him that the
ancient Fathers acknowledged but *one* Epistle
of St. Peter, i. e. the *First*, it must be meant,
Universally and without Exception; with reference
to the *Second*, which was not so acknowledg'd.

Jerome in St. *Jerom* grounds this doubt concerning the
the Word second Epistle, upon the difference from the
Petrus. first in point of *Style*. But this is true, in strict-
ness, of the second Chapter only, which is as dif-
ferent in Style from the first and third Chap-
ters, as it is from the first Epistle; being, as to
the

the Matter of it, manifestly taken from some *Jewish* Book, which gave an Account of the Scoffers before the Flood who derided *Noah's* Prediction of it, and applied by St. *Peter* to the false Teachers who were crept in among the Christians, and derided their *Expectation* of Deliverance from the Persecutions they were under, grounded upon what our Saviour and his Apostles had told them concerning the Judgments that were to come upon the *Jewish* Persecutors. As to the Style of that second Chapter, it is throughout *lofty* and *pompous*; and in that respect different from the Style of the other two. But is this a Suggestion fit to be oppos'd to the many Testimonies of its being St. *Peter's*, viz. ' Its bearing the Name of *Simon Peter*, by which he is so frequently spoken of in the Gospels.' ' The Express mention it makes of a *former* ^{2 Pet. iii.} Epistle he had written to them, and the visible ^{1.} *Connection* between the two Epistles (the *Second* being written to arm the Christians against the Uneasiness they were under, upon the *Delay* of that Deliverance which the *first* had promis'd:) ' The Mention he makes of his approaching Dissolution, *Knowing that shortly I must* ^{2 Pet. i.} *put off this my Tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus* ^{14.} *Christ hath shewed me*; which probably relates to what our Saviour intimated to St. *Peter* of the *time* of his giving Testimony to the Gospel by his Death, that it should be before the Destruction of *Jerusalem*; and the express mention of ^{John xxii.} what he *heard* and *saw* at the Transfiguration ^{2 Pet. i.} on the Mount, where none of the Disciples ^{16, 17, 1} were with Christ, except *Peter, James* and *John*. ^{Mat. xv} To all which it must be added, That ^{1.} there is a fair Presumption of its being written by an *Apostolical* Person, from his using the

2 Pet. iii. the Style of our beloved *Brother Paul*; and we
 2, 15. don't find it was ever ascrib'd to any other of
 that Character. So far from this, that *St. Jerom*,
 Jerom. in where he takes Notice of the Difference in Style
 the Word as the Foundation of the Doubts concerning it,
Petrus. solves the Difficulty, not by denying this Epistle
 to be *St. Peter's*, which could not be deny'd
 for the Reasons abovemention'd, but by sup-
 posing, that in the two Epistles they were two
 different hands who express'd his Sentiments in
Greek. Whether this was so, or not; it shows
 that in *St. Jerom's* Opinion, the Arguments for
 its being *St. Peter's* could not be got over; and
 in this Opinion, the Writers of that and the
 Mill. Pro- following Ages, both in the *Eastern* and *Western*
 eg. p. 25. Church, concur with great unanimity.

The Objection, and the only Objection, against
 Jerom. receiving the Epistle of *St. Jude* at first, was
 Catal. his citing the Prophecy of *Enoch*; but it is re-
 Jude. ally hard to find where the Force of the Argu-
 Jude 14, ment lies, That because an Apostle cites out of
 5. another Book (tho' we suppose it Apocryphal)
 a Passage very good in itself and very apposite
 to his Purpose, therefore he could not be the
 Author of the Writing into which the Citation
 is grafted; tho' such Writing bears his Name,
 Tertull. and is confirmed to be His by ancient Authority,
 e Ornat. as in this Case it is by the joint Testimonies of
 Jul. l. 1. *Tertullian*, *Clement of Alexandria*, and *Origen*,
 Clem. A- who expressly cite it as *St. Jude's*; wherein also
 ex. Pæ- there is a great Unanimity among the Writers
 ag. l. 3. of the succeeding Ages, both *Greek* and *Latin*.
 8. The SECOND and THIRD Epistles of *St.*
 Orig. JOHN, are so far from being liable to the Ob-
 Comm. in jection of a Difference in Style from the *first*,
 Matth. which was universally received as his; that the
 Rom. 11. manner
 223. *mill.*
 roleg. p.

manner of writing is remarkably the same in all the three; and of the thirteen Verses which make the whole second Epistle, several are manifestly the same *in Sense*, and some *word for word*. None of the three are under the Name of St. *John*, and in that respect the two last are of equal Authority with the first; but the second and third are written under the Style of *Elder*, which peculiarly suits the Age as well as Character of St. *John*, who was above ninety Years old when they were written, and had the Direction and Government of all the *Asiatick* Churches. Considering how very short these two Epistles are, and that several things contained in them are also to be found in the first Epistle, it is not to be expected that many Citations out of them should be met with in the Writers of the Church, either Ancient or Modern. But it so falls out, that *Irenæus* in the second Century cites three Verses word for word, out of the second Epistle, under the Name of *John the Disciple of our Lord*; ^{2 John 7, 8, 11.} *Irenæus* and, that no Doubt may remain whether he might ^{1. 1. c. 13.} not mean *John the Presbyter*, whom we find ^{§. 2.} mention'd in *Eusebius* as one of Christ's Disci- ^{1. 3. c. 18.} ples, or any other *John* but *John* the Apostle ^{Euseb. 1. 3. c. 39.} and Evangelist; he cites two other Passages to the very same Purpose, one taken out of the first Epistle and the other out of the Gospel of St. *John*, and all the three as taken out of the Writings of one and the same Person. *Clemens Alexandrinus*, citing a passage out of the first Epistle, calls it his *larger* Epistle; which supposes ^{lex. Strom.} one, at least, that was not so large. *Dionysius* ^{1. 2.} *Alexandrinus*, contending for an Opinion he had entertain'd, that St. *John* was not the ^{Euseb. 1. 7. c. 25.} Writer of the *Apocalypse*, makes it one Argument

Circ. An. 260. Euseb. 1. 6. c. 25. Mill. Proleg. p. 18. ment, that the Name is set to the Apocalypse, whereas no Name is set to the second or third Epistle, which he says were then usually ascribed to him. And *Origen*, where he tells us that *all* did not receive these two Epistles, implies that the *greatest part* did. The Occasion of writing them is supposed with great probability to have been, the Report made of the Liberality of the *Elect Lady* and of *Gaius*, by certain Persons whom St. *John* had recommended to the Churches of *Asia* for the furtherance of the Gospel; and these Acknowledgments of the Liberality of each, must come from one and the same hand, namely, that upon whose Recommendation it was bestowed.

Altho' the Book of REVELATIONS is of a different Nature from the Epistles, as relating more to the State of the Christian Church in *future* times, than to the Doctrines at first deliver'd to it; yet because it is part of the New Testament, and one of the Books about which Doubts have been rais'd, whether or no they were written by the Persons whose Names they bear; I will here lay down the many cogent Reasons there are for concluding it to have been written by St. *John* the Apostle and Evangelist, and not by any other. In the first Verse, it is called *The Revelation of Jesus Christ to his Servant John*, and at the the ninth Verse it is said, *I John was in the Isle that is called Patmos for the Word of God and for the Testimony of Jesus Christ*. Now Eusebius, speaking of the Persecution of the Christians by the Emperor *Domitian*, mentions St. *John the Apostle and Evangelist* as then banish'd to the Isle of *Patmos*. The same is mention'd by *Tertullian*; and *Clemens Alexandrinus* speaks of his Return from thence to *Ephesus* after the Death

Rev. i. 1, 19.

Euseb. 1. 3. c. 18.

Tertull. de Præscrip.

c. 36. Euseb. 1. 3. c. 23.

Death of *Domitian* ; and there is no Pretence that any other *John* was banish'd to that Island. *Justin Martyr*, in his Dialogue with *Trypho* the Jew, expressly ascribes it to *John*, one of the *Apostles of Christ*. *Irenæus* mentions it as the Revelation of *John the Disciple of our Lord* ; and that he meant *St. John the Apostle and Evangelist*, appears from what he tells us concerning the time when this Revelation was made to him, viz. about the latter End of the Reign of *Domitian*, which was the time when he was in the Island of *Patmos* ; and yet more clearly, by telling us it was the Disciple who lean'd upon *Jesus's Bosom at Supper*. *Tertullian* also cites it expressly under the Name of *John the Apostle* ; and *Origen*, where he speaks of the Banishment of *John the Brother of James* into that Island, speaks also of the Revelation there made to him, and cites the Book under his Name. Likewise the Stile given by the Ancients to the Writer of this Book, and affixt to the Title of it, I mean, * The *Divine*, is usually suppos'd to refer to the first Verse of *St. John's Gospel*, in which he asserts the † *Divinity* of Christ.

In these Authorities there are several Circumstances which give a peculiar Force to them in the present Point. In general, what they say, is deliver'd without the least Mark of Doubt or Hesitation. And as to the particular Writers, *Irenæus* was the Disciple of *Polycarp*, and *Polycarp* of *St. John* ; and he tells us, he had a Passage in this Book explain'd to him by those who had seen *John Face to Face*. *Justin Martyr* was converted to the Christian Faith within thirty eight Years after the Writing of the Apocalypse, and within fifty four Years from that Time

Just. Mart.
Dial.

Tryph.

Iren. 1. 4.

c. 37, 50.

Ibid. 1. 5.

c. 26.

Ibid. 1. 5.

c. 30.

Ibid. 1. 4.

c. 37.

Tertul.

contra

Marc. 1. 3.

c. 14.

Origen.

Commen.

Matth.

p. 417.

* Θεός.

† Θεός :

λόγος.

he wrote his Dialogue with *Trypho* the Jew. Those several Fathers who give Testimony to the Authority of the Apocalypse as written by *John* the Apostle and Evangelist, did not all dwell in *Asia*, but in several other Parts of the World, whose Sense they may be presumed to speak, as well as their own: *Irenæus* at *Lions* in *Gaul*, *Clemens* and *Origen* in *Egypt*, and *Tertullian* in *Africa*. And it is a poor Evasion of the Authority of those ancient Writers, to alledge that some of them had their peculiar Notions about *other* Points; as if a Singularity of Opinion in this or that Doctrine, could render them incompetent Witnesses to a Matter of Fact, which they had so good Opportunity to know.

Their Authority is further strengthened by this, that there is no Ground or Colour for the two Conjectures of the Apocalypse being written by *John* the Presbyter, or by *Cerintbus*. There is no Pretence to say, that the first was banish'd into the Isle of *Patmos*; and, as to the second, his Principles 'That Christ was a meer Man, and, 'That he was not to rise from the dead till the general Resurrection, are directly contrary to the Doctrine of the Apocalypse; and, moreover, *his* millenary State, was not the Life of *Saints*, as the Apocalypse represents it, but the Life of *Libertines*.

That there were so few Copies taken of this Book, in Comparison of the other Books of the New Testament, was owing to the subject Matter of it, which was very obscure, and related not so much to the *past* or *present*, as to the *future* State of the Christian Church, in which the generality of Christians were not directly concern'd. For this Reason, it was not join'd at first to the

Euseb. l. 3.
c. 28.

Ibid. l. 7.
c. 25.

Rev. i. 5,
7, 8, 11.
—xxi. 6.
—xxii. 13.

Orig.
Comm. in
Matth.
p. 220.

the *Evangelical* or *Epistolary* Canon, but was consider'd as a Writing by itself, and of a different Nature from the rest; neither was it directed to be read publickly in the Church, because of its Obscurity, and the little Relation it had to the Gospel State in those Days. And this, together with the * *time* when it was * Not be-
written, accounts for the Silence of the most fore the
early Fathers concerning it, and for its being Year 96.
omitted in some of the Catalogues of the Books of Holy Scripture, particularly that of the Council of *Laodicea*; the Design of which Council was to enumerate such Books as were to be *read publickly* in the Church, as appears by the express Words of the Canon upon that Head.

The difference in Style from St. *John*'s other Writings, and the mention of his *Name* here and not in the others, are also fairly accounted for by the difference of Subject; this being of the *Prophetick* Kind, and the Prophets usually prefixing their *Names* to the Accounts of the Visions and Revelations they had received from God; as we find in the Instances of *Isaiab*, *Isai. i. 1.*
Jeremiab, *Ezekiel*, *Daniel*, and others. But not- *Jerem. i. 1.*
withstanding the difference in *Style*, we may *Ezek. i. 3.*
observe, in several Instances, a *Co-incidence* in *Dan. vii. 2.*
Expression between this and his other Writings; and this generally, in such Expressions as are not to be met with in the whole New Testament, except in the Gospel and Epistles of St. *John*. In the Revelations, it is said of *Rev. xix.*
Christ, that his Name is call'd, *The Word of 13.*
God; and in the Gospel of St. *John* he is styled *Joh. i. 1.*
the Word, and in his first Epistle, *the Word of 1 Joh. i. 1.*
Life. In the Revelations, he is call'd *the Lamb*; *Rev. v. 6,*
and in the Gospel of St. *John*, *the Lamb of God. 12.*
In the Revelations, the Name of Christ is, *He Joh. i. 24,*
that *36.*

Rev. iii. 7. *that is true, — He that is faithful and true; and in*
 — xix. 11. *the Gospel of St. John, He that is true — full of*
 Joh. i. 14. *Truth, and the Truth.* In the Revelations,
 — xiv. 6. *Manna* is applied to *spiritual Food*; and so it
 1 Joh. v. 20. is applied in the Gospel of St. John. In the
 Rev. ii. 17. Revelations, it is said from the Prophet Zecha-
 Joh. vi. 32. *riah, Every Eye shall see him, and they also*
 Rev. i. 7. *which pierced him; and in the Gospel of St.*
 Joh. xix. *John, They shall look on him whom they pierced.*
 37. In the Revelations, Christ saith, *If any Man*
 Rev. iii. *hear my Voice, and open the Door, I will come*
 20. *to him, and sup with him, and he with me: In*
 Joh. xiv. *the Gospel of St. John, If a Man love me he*
 23. *will keep my Words, and my Father will love him,*
and we will come unto him, and make our abode
with him.

Thus stands the Authority of this Book,
 upon the Foot of ancient Testimonies. But
 when the Doctrine of the *Millenary State* began
 to be advanced under the Notion of a State in
 which *sensual Delights* were to be enjoy'd in the
 Euseb. l. 3. greatest Perfection, and the Authority of the
 c. 28. Revelations was alledged, tho' very unjustly,
 Ibid. l. 7. in support of that carnal Doctrine; the Zeal of
 c. 25. some Writers against this Doctrine, which was in-
 Mill's deed exceeding wicked and corrupt, led them to
 Prol. p. 19. raise Scruples about the Authority of the Book
 Rev. xx. itself; which, tho' it speaks of Christ's reign-
 4, 5. ing a thousand Years with the *Saints*, gives not
 the least Ground to suppose that it will be a
 State of sensual Delights. On the contrary, it
 supposes the Members of that Kingdom to be
Martyrs and other *Holy Men* who had preserved
 themselves from the Corruptions of the World.
 Mill's But after this Controversy was over, the Scru-
 Prol. p. 19 ples vanished, and the Christian Church receiv'd
 it among the other inspir'd Writings, upon
 those

those ancient Testimonies that it was the Work of St. *John* the Apostle and Evangelist ; tho' not being so proper as the rest to be read publickly in the Church, it might in that respect be consider'd sometimes in a different Light from them.

This is not the only Instance, in which a particular Controversy has led Men in the Heat of Dispute, to call in Question the Authority of particular Books of Scripture, which they thought unfavourable to the Doctrine they had espoused: There are Instances of this kind, both ancient and modern. The *Manichees*, who held a monstrous Opinion that the God of the Old Testament was not the God of the New, rejected St. *Matthew's* Gospel, on account of the References he makes to the Old Testament, which shew both to be the Dispensations of one and the same God, and both to center in the Messiah. The *Ebionites*, who in some sort received the Faith, but yet were zealous for the *Mosaical* Law, admitted no Gospel but that of St. *Matthew*, as written particularly for the use of the *Hebrews*. The *Alogi* (or Deniers of the *Logos*) finding it impossible to reconcile their Doctrine to the Gospel of St. *John*, and yet not venturing to except against the Authority of an Apostle, had no way left, but to deny that he was the Writer. The *Latin* Pag. 46. Church, as I have already observed, finding themselves press'd by some Passages in the Epistle to the *Hebrews* in favour of the *Novatian* Doctrine against the receiving of lapsed Penitents, shew'd too great an Inclination for some time, to cherish Doubts concerning the Author of that Epistle. And in later Days, it is well known, that the *Antinomians*, and others who

who have carried the Doctrine of Justification by Faith alone to too great a height, have also ...deavoured to invalidate the Epistle of St. *James*, which makes *Works* also a necessary Condition of our being justified in the Sight of God.

But however serviceable it may have been thought to the Advocates for this or that peculiar Tenet, to raise Doubts about the Authority of this or that Epistle, as particularly relating to the Dispute then in Hand; yet those Doubts can be of no Service to the Cause of Infidelity, as long as the Truth of the Christian Religion, and the general Doctrines of it, are supported by others, whose Writings have been *universally* received both as genuine, and as of divine Authority.

see before
35.

It appears by what has been said upon this Head, ' That the Books of the New Testament were written by the Persons whose Names they bear, or to whom they have been ascrib'd, and that those Writings are divinely inspired; ' That the greatest Part of those Books have been unanimously received by all Christian Churches from the beginning; ' That the Reason why some were not received so soon as others, was, the Necessity of particular Churches having Satisfaction as to their being written by some Apostle, or inspired Person, and the Difficulty of obtaining such Satisfaction in some Cases more than in others, by reason of distance of Place, or other Circumstances: ' That the Doubts which have arisen concerning some particular Books, have generally been the Doubts, not of *Churches*, but of *Persons*, and have been grounded either upon the want of express mention of the Writer's Name, or there having been two Persons of the same Name; both
which

which Uncertainties are adjusted, and the Doubts arising from them fully cleared, by Testimonies ancient and uncontested; ‘ That the Differences of Style are either imaginary, or such as the Differences in the Subjects and Occasions fairly account for; and are by no means of Weight enough to be opposed to the positive Testimony of ancient and authentick Writers; ‘ That those, and the like Arguments, weak and inconclusive in their Nature, have been generally laid hold on, on purpose to favour some Opinions which particular Persons had espoused, and which had no better Arguments to support them, and, ‘ That these having yielded to the Force of Truth for so many hundred Years, and the Writings of the New Testament having been so long received by the whole Christian Church as of Apostolical Authority, nothing more is needful to establish them as such, but to shew, that,

V. *The Books of the New Testament, in which the Doctrines delivered by Christ and his Apostles are contained, have been faithfully Transmitted to the Christians of succeeding Ages.* And, in general, it rests upon those who call in question the Fidelity of the Transmission in this Case, to shew that any *other* Book whatsoever has such and so many plain and strong Testimonies of a *faithful* Transmission, as the New Testament; lest while their Zeal against Christianity drives them into groundless Cavils and Doubts about the Authority of those Books, they involve themselves in the Absurdity of rejecting all ancient Writings whatsoever, as not only alter’d from the Originals, but alter’d to such a Degree as not to represent to us the genuine Meaning

ing and Design of their Authors. It is well known, how early the Christian Religion was carried into almost all Parts of the *Roman Empire*, into Regions and Countries very numerous and very distant from one another; and as Christianity spread, Copies of the New Testament spread with it, and not only remain'd in the Hands of Numbers of private Christians, but were publickly received and read in their religious Assemblies. So that if one *Person* had attempted to alter and corrupt his Copy, it would quickly have been discover'd by the rest; or if a whole *Country* had attempted it, the Copies throughout all other Countries would have been so many Testimonies of the Fraud. If therefore we could suppose the ancient Christians ever so much *inclined* to alter and corrupt, none of them could have attempted it with the least Probability of Success: And what render'd it yet more impracticable, was, the Appeal that might be made, upon any Suspicion of Forgery, to the Authentick Writings, remaining and kept with the greatest Care in the Archives of several Churches that had been planted by the Apostles; to which *Tertullian** expressly refers in his Reasonings against the Hereticks of those Times, as then in being, and to be freely consulted. But what should *tempt* or *incline* the first Christians to corrupt Books that contained those Truths, on which they grounded all their Hopes, and for which they were ready to sacrifice their Lives? Books, which they kept with so much Care, and held sacred to such a Degree, that if any Christian happened to be persuaded by Threatnings and Cruelties to deliver them up to the Heathen Persecutors, they were put under the severest Penance by the Church; and we know some chose

* Tertull.
de Præ-
script. adv.
Hæreti-
cos.

chose to die rather than deliver them. Many Passages also cited out of those Books are found in the most early Writers of the Church, which appear to be the same that we now have in our printed Copies. Controversies arose in the Church as early as the second Century; and as both Sides appeal'd to those Writings, so if either had changed and corrupted them, the Cheat must have been discover'd, and the Authors of the Corruption expos'd by their Adversaries; they who were concerned in those Controversies being many of them Persons who wanted neither Learning nor Penetration. The same Writings were early translated out of the *Greek* into other Languages (*Syriack, Latin, &c.*) between which and the Original *Greek* there is the greatest Agreement in *Sense* and *Matter*. Add to all this, That many ancient written Copies, of those early Translations, and also of the original *Greek*, have been preserved to our own Times, and procured by learned Men out of the several Countries in *Europe, Asia, and Africa*, where Christianity was planted in the most early Ages; and such Copies have been found, upon the exactest Collation, to agree with those that are now us'd in the Christian Church, with much less Variation than is allow'd, in all other Writings, to be fairly plac'd to the Mistakes and Oversights of Transcribers.

For as to the Objection from the great Number of various Readings which have been found upon comparing those Copies, it is of no manner of Weight. It is indeed fairly presum'd, that the Providence of God would preserve inspir'd Writings, which were intended for the perpetual Instruction of the Church, pure and uncorrupt, as to the *Doctrines* contained in them; but it is not pretended that the *Transcribers*

bers of those Writings were secur'd by any extraordinary Interpolation of Providence, from every the least Error in *copying* them. It was necessary that the Books themselves should be written under the immediate Direction of the Holy Spirit, because the Things to be deliver'd in them were above the Reach of natural Reason, and nothing less than divine Inspiration could make them a perpetual Rule to the Church. But the faithful *Transmission* of them to future Ages might be sufficiently prov'd, upon the same Foot and in the same manner as the faithful Transmission of any other ancient Writings. So that it rests upon those who urge this Argument against the Books of the New Testament, to shew that those various Readings do at all affect the *Doctrines* of Christianity, or that such Variety in any one Place renders any one Doctrine doubtful, that is not fully and clearly deliver'd in other Parts of the New Testament. On the contrary, I believe it may be safely affirm'd, that every single Copy would exhibit a true and just Account of Christianity; where there is an honest Disposition to learn, and (in order to that) to correct the Errors of Transcribers, by comparing Places of the same Import and Tendency with one another; making the usual Allowances for ordinary Slips of the Pen.

If the Number of Various Readings in the New Testament, as they have been publish'd from Time to Time by learned Men, should be granted to be greater than in other ancient Writings, as they are not; there are two Things that would plainly account for it: The first, that the Copies which were taken of this Book before the Use of Printing, infinitely exceeded
in

in Number the Copies of any other ancient Book whatsoever ; and the more the Copies are, the more numerous of course will the various Readings be: The second, that no ancient Writings whatsoever have been examin'd with the same Care, and the Copies collated with the like Exactness, and the various Readings set down even to a Difference as to Syllables, Letters, and Order of Words, as has been done in those of the New Testament ; which greatly increases the *Number* of Readings, of how little *Importance* soever most of them may be. But at the same time, it is very certain that the Number of Copies greatly *strengthens* the Authority of the Books, both by the *Agreement* of such vast Numbers fetch'd from all Parts of the World (just Allowance being made to the accidental Slips or Mistakes of Transcribers, which cause no material Alteration either in Sense or Doctrine,) and by the Light arising from the *Concurrence* of many Copies (such especially as are ancient) in one and the same Reading, by which we are enabled to determine the *true Reading* upon a sure Foundation. On the other hand, when the Copies are few, the Errors of Transcribers in many Cases are not to be set right upon any other Foundation than mere Conjecture. This is the general Sense of learned Men, as being evidently founded upon Reason and Experience ; and it appears to be so, from the great Endeavours that are used by all such as undertake to give correct Editions of ancient Authors, to procure as many *written* Copies as they can ; and it also appears to be true in Fact, that where the Copies were few, Editions have been very faulty and imperfect ; where many, very correct and accurate ; and in both Cases

more faulty or more correct, in proportion to the Number of Copies, such especially as are of greatest Antiquity ; in which Respect, as well as in the Numbers both of *Copies* and *Translations*, the New Testament has vastly the Advantage of all other ancient Writings whatsoever.

VI. *The Doctrines of the Apostles, contain'd in their Epistles and in the Acts, together with what is taught by our Saviour in the Gospels, were design'd to be a standing Rule of Faith and Manners to Christians in all Ages, and were from the Beginning consider'd and receiv'd as such by the Churches of Christ.*

That those Writings were *Design'd* to be a standing and perpetual Rule of Faith and Manners, appears from what has already been prov'd ; that is, from the Instruction, Commission, and Inspiration, which the Apostles receiv'd from Christ, together with the Power of working Miracles in proof of their Commission from him : And all this, in order to their declaring and opening to Mankind the whole Gospel Dispensation, and every Part of it, and their perpetuating the Knowledge of it throughout all Generations to the End of the World. These were full and sufficient Declarations of the Will of Christ, That the whole Dispensation of his Gospel should be open'd by them, and be received by the World as coming *from him*, who had thus instructed and enlighten'd them, and effectually secur'd them against Error and Mistake, and commission'd them to act in his Name, and ratify'd that Commission by Miracles, that no *Doubt* might remain but that they were sent by him on purpose to make a full and clear Discovery of that Dispensation
to

to the World. And the necessary Consequence of this is, in the first Place, That whatever they deliver'd concerning the *Doctrines* and *Duties* belonging to that Dispensation, was to be receiv'd by all Christians as properly coming from Christ; and then, That no *other* Persons having been inspir'd and commission'd to publish the Will of Christ, but the Apostles only, what they publish'd was the *whole* of what he intended to be publish'd. The contrary Suppositions plainly carry in them some one or more of these Absurdities, That Christ granted a Commission, without full Instructions for the Discharge of it; That Persons who acted under the Guidance of the Holy Ghost, did not discharge it faithfully; and, That all the while he was confirming their Doctrine by Miracles, he left them liable to Error. The Inference from all which would be, That he came down from Heaven to establish a new Religion, and impower'd special Messengers to publish it to the World, but yet left Mankind to the End of the World under an Uncertainty what his Religion was.

The Apostles, to give their Writings the Authority which justly belong'd to them, generally declare themselves in the Beginning of their Epistles to be the *Apostles* and *Servants* of Jesus Christ, that is, Persons *sent* by him, and specially employ'd in his Service; and in other Parts of the Epistles, to the same Effect, the *Ambassadors*, the *Stewards*, and the *Ministers* of Christ; all which Expressions imply, that they were the Persons he had appointed to convey his Will to Mankind, and to dispense to them the great Truths of the Gospel, which till then were unknown to the World. *Let a* 1 Cor. iv.
Man so account of us as of the Ministers of Christ 1.
 and

Rom. i. 5. *and Stewards of the Mysteries of God. — By whom we have received Grace and Apostleship, for Obedience to the Faith among all Nations for his Name.* And the same Apostle, speaking particularly of the Redemption wrought for us by Christ, and our Reconciliation to God by his
 2 Cor. v. Death, adds, *And hath given to us the Ministry*
 18, 19, 20. *of Reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the World unto himself, not imputing their former Trespases unto them, and hath committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation: Now then we are Ambassadors for Christ, as though*
 1 Tim. ii. *God did beseech you by us.* And elsewhere, upon
 5. *the same Subject, There is one God and one Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a Ransom for all, to be testified in due Time: Whereunto I am ordained a Preacher and an Apostle, a Teacher of the*
 Rom. xv. *Gentiles in Faith and Verity.* And again, *The*
 16. *Minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministring*
 Col. i. 25. *the Gospel of God; and, I am made a Minister of Christ according to the Dispensation of God which is given to me, to fulfil (i. e. fully to preach) the Word of God.*

Next, as to the *Doctrines* deliver'd, they are
 1 Cor. xiv. spoken of as the *Commandments of God and of*
 37. *Christ. The Things that I write unto you are the*
 2 Cor. ii. *Commandments of the Lord; and the Gospel*
 12. *preach'd was the Gospel of Christ, and the Gos-*
 1 Theff. *pel of God; the glorious Gospel of the Blessed God,*
 iii. 2. *which, says St. Paul, was committed to my*
 Rom. xv. *Trust.* And the same St. Paul, writing to the
 16. *Thessalonians, says, When ye received the Word*
 2 Cor. xi. *of God, which ye heard of us, ye receiv'd it not*
 7. *as the Word of Men, but as it is in truth the*
 1 Theff. ii. *Word of God.* But when, upon a particular
 2, 8, 9. *Occasion, he deliver'd only his own private*
 11. *Sentiments*
 1 Theff. ii. *13.*

Sentiments, he expressly tells the *Corinthians*, *1 Cor. vii.* *have no Commandment from the Lord, yet I give* ^{25, 40.} *my Judgment.*

Next, as to the *Guidance* and *Direction* under which their Doctrine was deliver'd, it has been already observ'd, That after the Apostles ^{Page 24.} had receiv'd their Commission to declare and publish the Gospel to all Nations, they also receiv'd the Gift of the Holy Ghost, who should *teach them all Things, and bring all Things to their* ^{John xiv. 26.} *Remembrance whatsoever Christ had said unto them,* and being the Spirit of *Truth*, should guide ^{xvi. 13.} them into all *Truth*. And so it is affirm'd by *St. Peter* of them all, that they preach'd the ^{1 Pet i. 12.} *Gospel with (or by) the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven;* and it is said of the particular ^{Ephes. iii. 5.} Doctrine, of the Gentiles being Fellow-Heirs with the Jews, that *it was reveal'd to the holy Apostles and Prophets* (in general) by the Spirit. It has also been before observ'd ^{Page 30.} particularly of *St. Paul*, that he receiv'd his Doctrine by immediate Revelation; and tho' he was not of the Number of those upon whom the Holy Ghost descended at the Feast of Pentecost, he declares in many Places of his Epistles that he acted under the *Guidance* of the same Spirit: *We speak the Wisdom of God in a Mystery — the* ^{1 Cor. ii. 7, 10, 16.} *Things which God hath reveal'd unto us by his Spirit. — We have the Mind of Christ; — He therefore* ^{1 Thess. iv. 8.} *that despiseth, despiseth not Man but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit. — We have* ^{1 Cor. ii. 12, 13.} *received, not the Spirit of the World, but the Spirit which is of God, that we may know the Things that are freely given us of God; Which Things also we speak, not in the Words which Man's Wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.* He tells the *Corinthians*, that he will give them ^{2 Cor. xiii. 1.}

a Proof of *Christ* speaking in him; and describing the Order in which the Dead are to rise again (*viz.* those who are dead, and those who shall be found alive at the general Resurrection) he declares, *This we say unto you by the Word of the Lord.* And St. *Peter* affirms, that what St. *Paul* had written to the Christians, was according to the Wisdom given unto him; and in the same Place he sets St. *Paul*'s Epistles upon the same Foot with the Scriptures of the *Old Testament*, which the Jewish Converts, to whom St. *Peter* was writing, did most firmly believe to be inspir'd.

If it be said that these are the Testimonies of Persons concerning *themselves*, it is again to be remember'd, that the Writers of the Epistles are the same Persons whom the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles testify to have been specially commission'd by Christ, and to have receiv'd from him the Gift of the Holy Ghost, and to have wrought many and great Miracles in his Name; and all this, on purpose to qualify them for publishing his Gospel to the World, and to put it out of all Doubt that they were *Ministers* and *Ambassadors* sent by him, and that therefore entire Credit might be given to whatever they deliver'd in his Name, and their Doctrine be receiv'd by all Christians as a true and full Account of the Gospel Dispensation, or, in other Words, as a *Divine Rule* of Faith and Manners.

Accordingly, The Christians of the most early Ages, declared and asserted in the clearest manner, that the Writings of the Apostles were divinely inspir'd, and that, as such, they became of course a Rule to all Christians. *Clement*, a fellow Labourer of St. *Paul*, writes thus to the

Clem.
Ep. 1. ad
Cor. §. 42,
7.

Corinthians :

Corinthians : “ The Apostles deliver’d the Go-
 “ spel to us, from our Lord Jesus Christ, and
 “ Jesus Christ from God. Wherefore, Christ
 “ was sent by God, and the Apostles by Christ.
 “ Having therefore receiv’d their Instructions,
 “ and being confirm’d in the Faith by the
 “ Word of God and the fullness of the Holy
 “ Ghost ; they went forth, preaching that the
 “ Kingdom of God was at hand : ” And he bids
 them consider the Epistle of *the blessed Apostle Paul*,
which was assuredly sent to them by the assistance of
the Spirit. Polycarp*, the Disciple of St. John,* Poly-
 carp. Ep. ad Philip.
 says to the *Philippians* concerning St. Paul, *Being*
present, he taught you the Word of Truth with all § 3.
exactness and soundness; and being absent, wrote
an Epistle to you, which if you look into, you may
be built up in the Faith that was deliver’d to you.
 Theophilus † of Antioch, in the second Century, † Theoph.
 calls the Evangelists *the Bearers of the Spirit*; and † Autol.
 says of the Prophets and Apostles, that they^{l. 3.}
spoke by one and the same Spirit. Irenæus*, in * Iren.
 the same Century, says, That *the Scriptures*^{l. 2. c. 47.}
were dictated by the Word of God and his Spirit;
 and, † *That one and the same Spirit preach’d in* † Iren.
the Prophets, and publish’d in the Apostles. And^{l. 3. c. 25.}
 he has one whole Chapter*, to shew that the* Iren.
 other Apostles as well as Paul, had their Know-^{l. 3. c. 13.}
 ledge by *Revelation* from God. He particularly
 blames those as impious, who presum’d to say,
 that the Apostles preach’d, before they had a
perfect Knowledge of what they were to preach :
 For, says he, “ After † our Lord was risen † Iren.
 “ from the Dead, and they were endued by^{l. 3. c. 1.}
 “ the Holy Ghost with Power from on high,
 “ they were fill’d with all Truths, and had
 “ perfect Knowledge, and then went forth into
 “ the Ends of the World, publishing the good
 K “ things

“ things which God hath provided for us, and
 “ preaching Peace from Heaven unto Men.”

* Justin Mart. Dial. with Trypho. † Clem. Alex. Strom. l. 5. * Clem. Alex. Strom. l. 1. † Orig. in Joh. p. 4, 5. Philocal. p. 7. 11, 21, 30.

Justin Martyr *, in the same Century, speaks of the Scriptures, as Writings full of the Holy Ghost. In the next Century, *Clemens Alexandrinus* † says, *The Apostles might well be call'd Prophets, one and the same Holy Spirit working in both*; and speaking of the Prophets and Apostles jointly, he says, * *They had the mind of the Prophetick and Instructing Spirit secretly reveal'd to them*; and he calls the Apostles, in particular, *Disciples of the Spirit*. *Origen* * mentions the Gospels, as acknowledged to be of *divine Authority* by all Churches; and speaking of the Inspiration of the Prophets, says, *That the same God inspir'd the Evangelists and Apostles*; and he mentions those sacred Books, as *not of Men, but from the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost, by the Will of the Father thro' Jesus Christ*; and says, *There is nothing in the Prophets, or the Law, or the Gospels, or the Apostles (by which last is meant the Epistles) that is not from the Fullness of God*; and, *That there is an entire Harmony and Agreement between the Old Testament and the New, between the Law and the Prophets, between the Evangelical and Apostolical Writings, and between the Apostolical Writings with relation to one another*; and both he and others frequently stile those Writings, *The Oracles of God, and The Voice of God*.

What has been already said, and repeated, concerning the Commission which the Apostles receiv'd from Christ for publishing his Gospel to the World, and his enduing them for that End with the Holy Spirit, and with the Power of working Miracles; abundantly shews, that whatever they deliver'd concerning the Nature
 of

of that Institution, and the Doctrines and Duties properly belonging to it, was intended by Christ and his Apostles to be a *fixt* and *perpetual Rule* to the Christian Church. And as they intended it, so the first Christians *understood* and *receiv'd* it. The Gospels were read in their Assemblies, † Just. as part of their publick Worship; The Exhortations of the Ministers deliver'd in the same Mart. A. pol. 2. Assemblies, were founded upon the Portions which had been read out of those Gospels; They began early to write *Commentaries* upon the Books of the New Testament, as upon a sacred Text; and Controversies were finally determined by what should appear upon Examination to be the true Meaning and Tenor of those Books. Upon this Foundation it is, that *Irenæus** attests the* Iren. Truth of his own Doctrine against one of the^{l. 3. c. 12.} Hereticks of that time; *Let him*, says he, *examine what I have written*, and he will find it *consonant to the Doctrine of the Apostles, and exactly agreeable to what they taught*. The same ancient Writer † speaks of what the Apo-† Iren. stles taught, as the *Rule of Truth*; and calls the^{l. 3. c. 11,} Gospels *the Pillar and Foundation of the Church*;^{12.} and says of the Apostles, That *the Church throughout the World grounding themselves upon their Doctrine, persever'd in the self-same Sentiments concerning God and his Son*. And, *We** *have** Iren. *not known the Methods of our Salvation from any*^{l. 3. c. 1.} *others, than those by whom the Gospel came to us, which the Apostles preach'd, and afterwards, by the Will of God, deliver'd down to us in Writing, to be the Foundation and Pillar of our Faith*. He † charges the Hereticks with perverting both † Iren. the *Evangelical* and *Apostolical* Writings to such^{l. 1. c. 7,} Senses as might favour their own Doctrines, and^{15.} with affirming the things which neither the *Prophets* preach'd

preach'd, nor *Christ* taught, nor the *Apostles* deliver'd; and that, while they went beyond the Scriptures, *they destroy'd the Bounds of Truth* *.

* Mem-
bra Verita-
tis.

† Tertull.
de Resur-
rect. c. 3.

* Tertull.
de Præ-
scrip. c. 15.

† Clem.
Alex.
Strom.
l. 7.

And so *Tertullian* †; *Take away from Hereticks their Pagan Doctrines, and let them refer their Questions to the Decision of the Scriptures, and they will not be able to stand.* And elsewhere he * censures those as weak, who think they can discourse of Matters of Faith, otherwise than from the *Books* containing that *Faith*. To the same Purpose, *Clemens Alexandrinus* † says, *Let us not content ourselves with the Testimonies of Men, but let us confirm that which comes in Question by the Word of God, which is to be credited beyond all Demonstrations; or rather is itself the only Demonstration.*

Whether therefore we consider, what the Commission was which the Apostles receiv'd from Christ, or what the Gifts and Powers, by which they were enabled to discharge it; what they declar'd concerning their Authority and the Doctrine they deliver'd, or what the first Christians believ'd and declar'd concerning them; In all and every of these Views, we see the clearest Evidence that the Matters and Doctrines contain'd in the New Testament, as coming from Persons who were commission'd and inspir'd by Christ to publish his Religion to the World, were design'd to be a *fixt* and *perpetual* Rule to Christians in all future Ages. And they were in fact receiv'd under that Character by the first Christians, and, after the Increase of the Gospel, by particular Churches, gradually, as these Churches came to a certain Knowledge of the several Books being written by Persons divinely inspir'd; and in process of time, by the whole Christian Church; upon a full and general

ral Conviction, that they were the Writings of such Persons, and that there was no just or reasonable Ground of Doubt, either about the Books, or the Writers of them. And as I observ'd before, the Slowness and Caution of particular Churches in giving assent, is one good Argument, that they were *faithful* and *impartial* Witnesses. So unjust have been the Suggestions of some, who yet bore no ill Will to Christianity, That all the Books of the New Testament became authentick *at once*, by a solemn Act of the Church, and, that it was the Authority of the Church, that made them a *Rule* or *Canon* to all Christians. On the contrary, particular Books were receiv'd by particular Churches, sooner or later; according to the time of writing, and according to the different Opportunities they had of coming to the Knowledge of them, by reason of the different Distance of Cities and Countries from one another, and the different Degrees of Correspondence among them. The Rule which determin'd them to admit the particular Books, was the Assurance they had, that they were written by Persons divinely inspir'd; and upon this (when it became clear to them upon due Enquiry and Examination,) they grounded the Authority of each Book. From henceforth, Writers cited the Books in Confirmation of the Doctrines and Duties of Christianity, and the People consider'd them as a divine Rule of Faith and Manners; both which we see as early as we have any of their Writings. And when by degrees, every particular Church was satisfi'd that all the Books were written by Persons divinely inspir'd, they publicly *declar'd* their Satisfaction in Councils occasionally assembled to regulate the general Affairs

fairs of the Church. The Books were not therefore authentick, because those Declarations were made, but the Declarations were therefore made, because the Books were authentick; the Church being consider'd only as a *Witness* that they were written by the Persons, whose Names they bear, and to whom they are ascrib'd, and from whose Inspiration they derive their Authority.

I am well aware, that in later Ages there have arisen Men who would confine the Christian Rule or Canon to the Writings of the Evangelists, and the Christian Faith to the single Article of believing *Jesus to be the Messiah*; this seeming to have been sufficient *at first* to gain Admittance into the Christian Church, and the Truth of that Proposition being abundantly attested by the four Gospels. But it was not rightly consider'd by those Men, how *extensive* that Article was, and how many more it included in it; the Assent to it being, in effect, an Acknowledgment that Jesus was the *Son of God*, and the Baptism receiv'd in vertue of that Assent, an embracing of the Doctrine of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and both the Assent and the Baptism, a general Profession of taking Christ for their Master; and that Profession, a general Engagement to conform to all the Doctrines and Rules which he should deliver, either by himself or by Persons whom he should commission to make further Declarations of his Will. So that the Admission into the Church by Baptism upon the Belief of that single Article, was properly the admitting Persons into the *School* of Christianity, to be further *instructed* and *built up* in the Faith of Christ: and to consider such Admission in any other Light, is just as if one should argue that a Child is a complete Man, because he has all the
Parts

Parts of a Man, and will by due *Nourishment* and *Instruction* grow up gradually to the *Stature* and *Knowledge* of a perfect Man. This is the *Light* in which the *Apostles* of our Lord consider'd it. *St. Peter* writing to the *Christians* dispers'd in several *Parts* of the *World*, directs them as *new born Babes* (as those who were yet tender and young in the *Christian Faith*) to de- ^{1 Pet. ii. 2.} *fire the sincere Milk of the Word*, that they may grow thereby. And *St. Paul* tells the *Christians* at ^{1 Cor. iii.} *Corinth*, to whom he spoke as unto *Babes* in *Christ*, *I have fed you with Milk, and not with Meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it.* And when he reproves the *Hebrews* for their slow ^{Heb. v.} *Progress* in the *Knowledge* of the *Christian Faith*, ^{12, 13, 14} he tells them; *When for the time ye ought to be Teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first Principles of the Oracles of God, and are become such as have need of Milk and not of strong Meat: For every one that useth Milk, is unskilful in the Word of Righteousness, for he is a Babe. But strong Meat belongeth to them that are of full Age, even those who by reason of use (in the Margin, it is Habit or Perfection) have their Senses exercis'd to discern both Good and Evil.* From whence he immediately infers, *Therefore* ^{Heb. vi.} *leaving the Principles (or first Rudiments) of the* ^{1, 2.} *Doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto Perfection, not laying again the Foundation of Repentance from dead Works, and of Faith towards God; of the Doctrine of Baptisms, and of laying on of Hands, and of the Resurrection of the Dead and of eternal Judgment.*

A late ingenious Writer*, who has traced- ^{* Dr. Bunet, late Master of the Charter-House} out the several Steps taken by *Christ* and his *Apostles* in the first *Promulgation* of the *Gospel*, ^{in his Bo De Fide Officiis,} had a true *Notion* of this, and calls the *Proposition*, ^{p. 117.}

position, That Jesus is the Messiah, the first *Entrance* and *Initiation* into the Christian Faith; and adds, *That in the Progress of the Gospel, the Apostles explain'd the Heads of the Christian Faith more fully and openly, to the end that at length by their Preaching and Ministry the whole Will and Counsel of God might be manifested; that is, all things which ought to be believed and done to obtain eternal Life.* And, speaking of the *Inspiration* † of the Apostles, he says, *The Holy Ghost was given them, not only to bring to their Remembrance whatever they had heard from Christ, but also, to add all such things as were necessary to fill up and complete the Christian Doctrine.* He says* further, *That in the Acts of the Apostles we have the first Lineaments of a rising Church, and as it were the Ground-work of the*

- P. 120. *Christian Faith*; and afterwards, where † he describes the *gradual* opening of the Gospel, he takes Notice, that the Apostles, *to whom was committed the expounding of that new Revelation, deliver'd some Doctrines sooner, and some later; and compares the Growth of the Christian Dispensation to that of a Flower, which opens itself gradually; and adds, that some of the Mysteries belonging to it, were more seasonably deliver'd after the first Seeds had taken root.*

P. 139. An ingenious Person, who at his first Transition from Enquiries merely rational to those of Revelation, set himself to reduce the fundamental Doctrines of Christianity to the narrowest Compass he possibly could, seems not to have considered enough this *gradual Opening* of the Gospel Dispensation, when he made that one Article “That Jesus is the Messiah,” the Belief of which was no more than the *first Entrance* into the Christian Faith, to be the *whole*

fr.
Locke's
reason-
ableness
of Chris-
tianity.

whole of it; if he meant it in any other Sense than as it carried in it a general Acknowledgment, that they who made that Profession did thereby receive Christ for their Master, and were ready to embrace whatever Doctrines or Precepts should come from him, with a sincere Disposition to be instructed in them. And, in truth, that he meant it in this Extent, and designed no more than a *speculative Enquiry* about the Nature of Fundamentals, seems plain from what he adds, *That as for the* Page 300.
rest of Divine Truths, there is nothing more required of a Christian, but that he receive all the Parts of Divine Revelation with a Docility and Disposition prepared to embrace and assent to all Truths coming from God; and submit his Mind to whatsoever shall appear to him to bear that Character. This was all that could be required of the first Converts to Christianity, to whom the Gospel Dispensation was not yet opened; but it follows not from thence, that no more was *necessary* to be believed by Christians, *after* that Dispensation was fully opened: On the contrary, it follows, that an *actual* Belief of the Doctrines of the Gospel, *after* a full Declaration made of them, was as necessary to make Men Christians, as a *Readiness* and *Disposition* to receive them was *before*; and the way by which both approved themselves to be true and sincere Christians, was an honest Disposition to embrace all the Light that was afforded them, whether by Christ himself, or by those whom he inspired and commissioned for the opening and publishing his Gospel to the World. And therefore the same Author speaking of the Apostles, and their Writings, says, *These Holy* Page 297.
Writers, inspired from above, writ nothing but
L Truth,

Truth, and in most Places very weighty Truths to us now, for the expounding, clearing, and confirming of the Christian Doctrine. And in his later Years, when he had more maturely considered the Frame and Tenor of the Gospel Dispensation, he calls the Writings of the New Testament, without Distinction, *Holy Scripture, Holy Writings, the Sacred Text, Writings dictated by the Spirit of God*; and says of the Writings of the Apostles, *That the Doctrines contained in them tend wholly to the setting up the Kingdom of Jesus Christ in this World*. Particularly, of St. Paul and his Epistles, upon several of which he wrote a very useful and elaborate Commentary during his Retirement in his last Years, he says, *That as to this Apostle, he had the whole Doctrine of the Gospel from God by immediate Revelation; that for his Information in the Christian Knowledge, and the Mysteries and Depths of the Dispensation of God by Jesus Christ, God himself had condescended to be his Instructor and Teacher; and that he had received the Light of the Gospel from the Fountain and Father of Light himself*; and as to his Epistles, *That they were dictated by the Spirit of God*. In his Preface to the Commentary upon the Epistle to the Romans, after having enumerated some of the Particulars in which that Epistle opens the Gospel Dispensation to Mankind, he adds, *These are but some of the more general and more comprehensive Heads of the Christian Doctrine to be found in this Epistle. The Design of a Synopsis will not permit me to descend more minutely to Particulars; but this let me say, that he that would have an enlarged View of true Christianity, will do well to study this Epistle*. To induce Men to the Study of the New Testament in general,

general, he says, *The only way to be preserved* Ibid. p. 24.
from Error, is to betake ourselves in earnest to the
Study of the way to Salvation, in those Holy
Writings wherein God has revealed it from Hea-
ven, and proposed it to the World; seeking our
Religion where we are sure it is in truth to be
found. And, in a Letter written the Year be-Posthum.
 fore his Death, to one who had asked him this Works, p.
 Question, What is the shortest way to attain ³⁴⁴
 to a true Knowledge of the Christian Religion
 in the full and just Extent of it? his Answer is,
Study the Holy Scripture, especially the New Testa-
ment; therein are contained the Words of eter-
nal Life: It has God for its Author, Salvation
for its End, and Truth without any Mixture of
Error for its Matter. And of St. Paul's Epistles,
 which he was more particularly led to speak of
 in the Preface to his Commentary, he says,
 That the studying and understanding them
 aright, will make those who do it to rejoice in
 the Light they receive from those most useful Parts
 of Divine Revelation.

This Writer also furnishes us with an Answer
 to the Objection usually made by Infidels and
 Scepticks, That if the Epistles were written
 upon particular Occasions only, they would not
 have been written at-all if those Occasions had
 not happened, and that therefore the Christian
 Faith was compleatly delivered before, in the
 Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. *The*
Providence of God, says he, hath so ordered it, Pref. to
that St. Paul has writ a great Number of Epistles Com-
 [and the same is true of those that were written ment. p.
 by other Apostles] *which tho' upon different Oc-* ^{21.}
casions, and to several Purposes, yet are all con-
fined within the Business of his Apostleship, and
so contain nothing but Points of Christian Instruc-

tion; amongst which, he seldom fails to drop in and often to enlarge upon the great and distinguishing Doctrines of our Holy Religion. If the Writing of the Epistles was ordered by the Providence of God, the same Providence certainly intended that they should be a *Rule and Direction* to the Christian Church; and if the Providence of God had not so ordered it, that the Epistles should be written, the same Providence would have found out some *other way* to open and explain the Christian Revelation in the Manner they have done. The Question therefore is not, what the State of Things would have been if the Epistles had *not* been written (which no Mortal can tell,) but the only Question is, how the Matter stands, now they are written, and whether we are at liberty to consider them otherwise than as Openings and Explanations of the Christian Doctrine, when they come from Persons divinely inspir'd, and commission'd by Christ to publish his Gospel to the World; in virtue of which (as the other Writer before mention'd has truly said) they were enabled and empower'd to add *all such Things as were necessary* to fill up and compleat the Christian Doctrine.

Burn. de
Fide, &c.
p. 120.

Whatever therefore we find in the Writings of the Apostles that concerns the Doctrine and Economy of the Christian Dispensation, whether it be further *Explanations* of what is more generally deliver'd in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, or *Additions* to them; it is what they were empower'd by Christ and enabled by the Holy Ghost to deliver to the World, and so became a Rule of Faith and Practice to Christians to the End of the World. Such are these that follow; The Misery brought upon
Mankind

Mankind by the Fall of *Adam*, and the Deliverance out of that Misery as wrought for us by Christ: The Insufficiency of the Mosaical Law for obtaining Salvation: The typical Nature of the Ceremonial Law as prefiguring Christ, the End of that Law and our great Sacrifice, High-priest and Law-giver: The *outward* Performances of the Ceremonial Law, represented as Emblems of *inward* Purity: The Excellency of the Sacrifice, Ministry, and Laws of Christ, beyond those of the Mosaical Dispensation: The Efficacy of the Death of Christ and of the whole Gospel Dispensation, for obtaining Pardon of Sin, Reconciliation to God, and Eternal Life: The Union of the divine and human Nature in Christ: The Necessity — of his *Incarnation*, to be first a Teacher and Example, and after that to be capable of dying; of his *Death*, to take away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself; of his *Resurrection*, to prove his Conquest over Death, and to be an Earnest of our rising from the dead; and of his *Ascension*, to be vested with all Power in Heaven and Earth, and to be our Mediator, Advocate and Intercessor at the Right-hand of his Father: The Universality and Sufficiency of the Grace promised in the Gospel, decreed by God from the Foundation of the World, and revealed in due Time in the Gospel, for the Salvation of all true Believers: The Right of Gentiles as well as Jews, to be Partakers of the Mercies and Benefits of the Gospel Covenant in Christ: The Justice of God in rejecting the unbelieving Jews and calling the Gentiles: The Necessity of Faith in him, in order to our Justification in the Sight of God, and the Impossibility of obtaining Salvation in any other way than thro' the

the Atonement made by him : The Efficacy of Faith, and the Necessity of good Works, as the genuine Fruits of a true and lively Faith : The Sanctification of our Nature by the Spirit of God : The ordinary Operations and Influences of the Holy Spirit ; and the Obligation to Love, Peace, Meekness, Gentleness, and mutual Forbearance, as the Fruits of the Spirit : The Power and Vigilance of our Enemy the Devil and his wicked Spirits ; and the great Sinfulness of Envy, Detraction, Malice, Hatred and Revenge, as properly the Works of the Devil : The Duty of doing all Things to the Glory of God, by employing our several Gifts and Talents for that End : The Duty of Repentance from dead Works, of dying to Sin and living to God, and of putting on the new Man, and living, not according to the Flesh but according to the Spirit : The Duties of Mortification and Self-denial, in order to the subduing our inordinate Lusts and Appetites : The absolute Necessity of Holiness, and the utter Inconsistency of Uncleaness of all Kinds with the Purity of the Gospel : The Duty of preserving the Bond of Marriage sacred and inviolable : The Nature of the Church of Christ upon Earth, and the Communion of Christians with him as their Head, and with one another as Joint Members of his Body : The true Import, due Administration, and proper Efficacy of the Ordinances instituted by him : The Government of his Church, and the Appointment of Pastors and Teachers therein, to minister in holy Things, and to explain to the People the Doctrines of Christianity, and enforce the Duties of it : The publick Worship and Discipline appointed in his Church, the first

first to be attended, and the second to be submitted to by all Christians: The Necessity of Union among the Members of Christ's Church, and the great Mischief of Divisions: The Duty of praying for the Wants of *one another* both spiritual and temporal: The due Regulation of religious Zeal, and the Danger of a misguided Zeal: The Duty of preaching, and taking up, the Cross of Christ, and the Mischiefs of corrupting the Christian Faith by Philosophy and the Wisdom of this World: The extreme Danger of Infidelity and Apostacy from the Faith: The distinguishing Reward of those who suffer patiently for the Truth of the Gospel, and persevere unto the End: The Relation which good Christians bear to the Saints in Heaven, while they continue upon Earth: The great Happiness that is there laid up for all the faithful Servants of Christ: The Order of the general Resurrection, and the Changes that will be then made in the Bodies of good Men.

These and the like Heads of Doctrine and Instruction which are found in the Epistles, being added to the Light which we receive from the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, give us a compleat View of the Christian Dispensation and every Branch of it; the one being the Foundation, and the other the Superstructure, and both necessary to build us up in the true Faith and Doctrine of Christ. And whether these be all equally necessary to be explicitly known and believed, or all equally fundamental, is an useless and idle Enquiry. Whoever reads the Writings of the Apostles, and is persuaded that the Doctrines they delivered were received from Christ, or written by the Direction and Assistance of his Holy Spirit, cannot

not but think himself obliged to believe and do whatever he finds delivered in these Writings, and to consider them as a Divine Rule of Faith and Practice.

As to the Duties merely moral, and such as belong to our several Stations and Circumstances in this World, no Infidel has ever been so hardy as to deny that the Epistles contain a Variety of admirable Precepts and Directions for our Conduct and Behaviour in the several Relations of Life (for Magistrates and People, Wives and Husbands, Parents and Children, Masters and Servants) and also in the several *Conditions* and *Circumstances* of Life, Riches and Poverty, Health and Sickness, Prosperity and Adversity. Nor need I repeat here what I have shewn at large elsewhere, That these and the like Duties, as laid down and enjoined in those sacred Writings, are not only carried to higher Degrees of Perfection than they ever were in the Schools of Morality, but also have far greater *Weight* here, as having the Stamp and Sanction of Divine Authority, and as they are enforced by Considerations relating to our eternal Happiness in the next Life, and by Motives immediately resulting from our Relation to Christ, and from the general Doctrines and Principles of the Christian Faith.

It is true, that the *immediate Occasion* of several of the Epistles, was the correcting Errors and Irregularities in particular Churches and Countries. Such were ‘ The corrupting Christianity with Mixtures of Judaism and Philosophy, Apostacy from the Faith they had receiv’d, Contentions and Divisions among themselves, Neglect of the publick Assemblies and Misbehaviour in them, The despising of Government,

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The dishonouring of Marriage, The allowing Fornication, &c. And God knows our own times are a sad Instance of the Necessity of such Cautions in *all* Ages, and the no less Necessity of attending to the Duties which are directly opposite to those Vices and Irregularities, and which the Apostles take *Occasion* from thence to lay down and enforce. And even their Decisions of Cases concerning Meats and Drinks, and the Observation of the Ceremonial Law, and other like Doubts which were peculiar to the Jewish Converts in the first *Occasion* of them; these Rules also are, and always will be, our surest Guides in all Points relating to Christian Liberty, and the Use of things indifferent; when the Grounds of those Decisions, and the Directions consequent upon them, are duly attended to, and applied to Cases of the like Nature by the Rules of Piety and Prudence; or, as a learned Writer expresses it, *By Analogy and Parity of Reason*, those *may be extended* Dr. Hammond. *very profitably to the general Beboof and Advantage of other Churches of God, and particular Christians of all Ages*; especially, in one Point which is of universal Concern in Life, I mean, The Duty of abstaining from many things which are in themselves innocent, if we foresee that they will give Offence to weak Christians, or be the Occasion of leading others into Sin.

The Sum then of the 6th Head is this; ‘ That the Apostles were entrusted by Christ with the making a full and entire Publication of his Gospel, and inspir’d by the Holy Ghost, to enable them to discharge that Trust: ‘ That the Books of the New Testament were all written or * ap-^{* The Gospels of} prov’d by them; ‘ That Christians in all Ages ^{Mark and Luke. See} have thought themselves obliged to consider and understand ^{p. 11.}

understand the Nature of the Gospel Dispensation, as they found it explain'd by Persons thus authoris'd and inspir'd: and, ' That as soon as the several Books of the New Testament appear'd upon clear and evident Proof to be written by the Persons whose Names they bore, all Christian Churches receiv'd them as Inspir'd Writings, and as a Divine Rule of Faith and Manners.

The Inference from all this, which every one who is a Christian in earnest ought to make to himself, is, To consider it as his indispensable Duty to *peruse* and *attend* to those sacred Books, as explaining to him the Terms of Salvation according to the Gospel Covenant, and acquainting him with the Conditions requir'd on his Part in order to obtain it. And because the Books of the *Old Testament* are also the *Oracles* of God deliver'd from time to time to the Jewish Nation, and are declar'd by the New Testament to be written by divine Inspiration, and do contain in them many excellent Lessons of Duty, and a great Variety of Mercies and Judgments sent upon Men and Nations according to their Obedience or Disobedience to the Commands of God, and also the Accounts of God's Communications with Mankind, and his Dealings with them, from the Creation of the World; together with a Treasure of Devotions and Meditations of all kinds and for all Conditions, especially in the Book of Psalms: Let me therefore further intreat you, carefully to peruse those sacred Writings; frequently and seriously meditating upon the various Providences and Dispensations of God to Men, and learning from thence to praise and adore his Power, Wisdom, Justice and Goodness, and to be careful above all things to recommend yourselves to his Favour

Favour and Protection by a strict and uniform Obedience to his Laws. What St. Paul says of *2 Tim. iii. Timothy*, is a high Commendation of him: *From* ^{15, 16, 17.} *a Child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation through Faith which is in Christ Jesus: And then he adds, All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness: That the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnish'd unto all good Works. And as God has caus'd all Holy Scriptures* (both of the Old and *1 Cor. x.* New Testament) *to be written for our Learning,* ^{11.} as the Liturgy of our Church expresses it; be *Collect* you always careful, that (in the Words of the *for second* same Liturgy) *you do in such wise hear them,* ^{Sunday in} *read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by* ^{Advent.} *Patience and Comfort of his holy Word, you may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed Hope of everlasting Life, which he hath given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

TO CONCLUDE:

IN this and my two former Letters, I have given you a View of the Christian Religion, and the Evidences of the Truth of it, in as short a Compass, and in the plainest Manner, I was able; with an Eye, throughout, to the present Attempts of Infidels against our common Faith, and with a sincere Desire to preserve you from the *Infection*, and to *Establish* you in that Faith. I have shewn you, 'That the Reveal'd Will of God is your *only* sure Guide in the Way to Salvation; 'That a full Revelation of his Will, concerning the Method and Terms of your Salvation,

vation, is contain'd in the Writings of the New Testament; ' That those Writings are genuine and authentick, and have been faithfully transmitted to us; and, ' That if you neglect the Means of Salvation which God has appointed, and seek for it in any other Way, you will not only fail of it in the End, but likewise render yourselves inexcusable in his Sight. I beseech you therefore to weigh and consider what I have written for your Use, with such Seriousness, Attention, and Impartiality, as the *Importance* of these Things most manifestly requires and deserves; and to take great Care that your Enquiries after Truth be wholly free from the Influences of Profit or Pleasure, Pride or Passion, and from all Views and Considerations whatsoever, except a sincere Desire and Intention to *Know* and *Do* the Will of God, in order to secure your eternal Salvation. And, that in the Pursuit of this great Work, your own Endeavours may be ever accompanied with the divine Direction and Assistance, is the hearty and earnest Prayer of

Your Faithful Friend and Pastor,

Edm'. London'.

